



# DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 1992

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SECRETARY FOR MONETARY AFFAIRS ON DEPOSIT PROTECTION SCHEME

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MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT:

I AM MOST GRATEFUL TO THOSE MEMBERS WHO HAVE SPOKEN. THIS HAS, I BELIEVE, BEEN A THOUGHTFUL, INTERESTING AND USEFUL DEBATE. WE ARE MAKING CAREFUL NOTE OF WHAT MEMBERS HAVE SAID AND WILL TAKE THEIR VIEWS INTO ACCOUNT WHEN WE COME TO CONSIDER HOW WE SHOULD PROCEED WHEN THE CONSULTATION PERIOD CLOSES AT THE END OF THIS MONTH.

I SHALL REFRAIN FROM COMMENTING ON SPECIFIC POINTS WHICH MEMBERS HAVE MADE, AS TO DO SO MIGHT PRE-EMPT OUR PROPER EVALUATION OF ALL THE SUBMISSIONS WHICH WE RECEIVE DURING THE PERIOD OF CONSULTATION. NEVERTHELESS, I FEEL I SHOULD SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON TWO IMPORTANT POINTS.

FIRST, I MUST AGAIN STRESS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER OR NOT A DEPOSIT PROTECTION SCHEME SHOULD BE INTRODUCED IN HONG KONG. AS THE CONSULTATION PAPER WE HAVE ISSUED IDENTIFIES, AND HAS BEEN REFLECTED IN THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY MEMBERS, THE SUBJECT IS A COMPLEX ONE TO WHICH THERE ARE NO EASY ANSWERS. DEPOSIT PROTECTION SCHEMES HAVE THEIR DISADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS AS WELL AS THEIR ADVANTAGES. THERE IS A NEED, THEREFORE, TO WEIGH THESE CAREFULLY, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE PARTICULAR CHARACTERISTICS OF HONG KONG, BEFORE WE CAN DECIDE WHETHER SUCH A SCHEME WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR US.

THIS IS WHAT WE WILL BE DOING ONCE THE CONSULTATION PERIOD IS OVER, TAKING CAREFUL ACCOUNT OF ALL THE SUBMISSIONS WE HAVE RECEIVED. IF THERE ARE THOSE WHO HAVE YET TO PUT IN A SUBMISSION BUT WISH TO DO SO, I WOULD URGE THEM TO DO SO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AS THEY ONLY HAVE UNTIL THE END OF THE MONTH. IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT, DESPITE THE WIDE PUBLICITY THE CONSULTATION PAPER RECEIVED, THERE ARE MANY WHO ARE STILL NOT AWARE THAT THEIR COMMENTS HAVE BEEN SOUGHT. IF THIS IS SO, THIS DEBATE MAY WELL HAVE HEIGHTENED AWARENESS OF THE SUBJECT. THE MONETARY AFFAIRS BRANCH HAS AVAILABLE AMPLE COPIES OF THE PAPER IN BOTH ENGLISH AND CHINESE AND WILL BE HAPPY TO PROVIDE THEM TO ANY WHO ARE INTERESTED.

SECONDLY, I WISH TO REFUTE ANY SUGGESTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT EMBARKED ON THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR ADDRESSING ANY SHORTCOMINGS IN OUR SUPERVISORY SYSTEM. WE HAVE A SOUND AND EFFECTIVE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FULLY MEASURING UP TO WORLD STANDARDS. OUR BANKS ARE IN GOOD HEALTH, PROFITABLE AND WELL-MANAGED. THE MAJOR REFORMS WE INTRODUCED TO THE MID-1980S HAVE FULLY PROVED THEIR WORTH AND HAVE ENABLED OUR BANKING SYSTEM TO EMERGE UNSCATHED FROM SEVERAL SUBSEQUENT SHOCKS. LET ME REITERATE THAT THE PROBLEMS WHICH AFFECTED BCC(HK) AROSE OUTSIDE HONG KONG AND SHOULD NOT BE ATTRIBUTED TO DEFICIENCIES IN OUR REGULATORY SYSTEM. FURTHERMORE, THE BCCI GROUP CAME TO HONG KONG BEFORE OUR REGULATORY SYSTEM WAS REFORMED AND BEFORE THE COMMISSIONER HAS HIS PRESENT POWER IN RESPECT TO THOSE WHO COULD CONTROL AND RUN BANKS.

/THIS SAID .....

THIS SAID, WE CANNOT OF COURSE AFFORD TO STAND STILL AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF EVOLVING MARKETS AND WE SHALL CONTINUE TO KEEP OUR SUPERVISORY REQUIREMENTS AND METHODS UNDER REVIEW. IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT I INTRODUCED INTO THIS CHAMBER LAST MONTH THE BANKING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 WHICH SEEKS TO ENHANCE THE ROLE OF AUDITORS IN THE SUPERVISORY PROCESS. THERE WILL, I AM SURE, BE FURTHER REFINEMENTS WE WILL WISH TO MAKE FROM TIME TO TIME, FOR INSTANCE ARISING OUT OF THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE BASLE GROUP OF INTERNATIONAL SUPERVISORS IN THE WAKE OF THE CLOSURE OF THE BCCI GROUP, BUT THESE SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS DETRACTING FROM THE OVERALL ROBUSTNESS OF OUR PRESENT SUPERVISORY SYSTEM OR THE HEALTH OF OUR BANKING SYSTEM.

FINALLY, MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT, LET ME TOUCH ON THE QUESTION TO WHICH SEVERAL MEMBERS HAVE ALLUDED OF PROVIDING PRIORITY TO SMALL DEPOSITORS IN THE EVENT OF THE LIQUIDATION OF A BANK. WE WOULD EXPECT SUCH AN EVENT TO BE VERY RARE BUT, NEVERTHELESS, WE HAVE CONSIDERED SUCH A PROPOSAL WORTHY OF EXAMINATION AND, AS IDENTIFIED IN THE CONSULTATION PAPER, HAVE ASKED THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMPANY LAW REFORM TO LOOK AT THIS PROPOSAL. THEIR CONSIDERATION IS PROCEEDING IN PARALLEL WITH OUR CONSULTATION ON THE QUESTION OF A DEPOSIT PROTECTION SCHEME AND WE HOPE TO RECEIVE THEIR INITIAL VIEWS SHORTLY.

MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT, THE MOTION BEFORE THE COUNCIL URGES THE ADMINISTRATION TO CONSIDER SERIOUSLY THE INTRODUCTION OF A DEPOSIT PROTECTION SCHEME. WE ARE INDEED CONSIDERING THE MATTER VERY SERIOUSLY BUT, LEST IT BE THOUGHT THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAS ALREADY MADE UP ITS MIND ON THE SUBJECT, AND I HAVE ALREADY MADE CLEAR THAT THIS IS NOT THE CASE, THE OFFICIAL MEMBERS INTEND TO ABSTAIN WHEN THE MOTION IS VOTED UPON.

THANK YOU MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT.

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SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER ON INDUSTRIAL SAFETY

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MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT,

AS SEVERAL MEMBERS HAVE RECALLED, THIS COUNCIL PASSED A MOTION ON 1 MAY 1991 URGING THE ADMINISTRATION TO UNDERTAKE A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THREE ASPECTS, NAMELY, HAZARD PREVENTION; DISABILITY ASSESSMENT AND COMPENSATION; AND REHABILITATION. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, A JOINT STEERING COMMITTEE COMPRISING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE HEALTH AND WELFARE BRANCH, THE EDUCATION AND MANPOWER BRANCH AND THE RELEVANT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WAS ESTABLISHED TO CONDUCT THE REVIEW. THIS WAS COMPLETED AT THE END OF 1991 AND THE JOINT STEERING COMMITTEE'S REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS WERE PRESENTED TO OMELCO ON 6 JANUARY THIS YEAR. ALTHOUGH THESE RECOMMENDATIONS MIGHT NOT HAVE GONE AS FAR AS SOME MEMBERS WOULD LIKE, THEY WERE, NEVERTHELESS, POSITIVE AND PRACTICAL STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTIONS. THE ADMINISTRATION HAS SINCE BEEN PURSUING THE RECOMMENDATIONS WITH VIGOUR AND HAS UNDERTAKEN TO KEEP THE OMELCO PANELS ON HEALTH SERVICES AND MANPOWER INFORMED OF PROGRESS FROM TIME TO TIME.

/I HOPE .....

I HOPE THIS BRIEF PREAMBLE WILL ASSURE MEMBERS THAT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IS AS CLOSE TO OUR HEART AS IT IS TO THEIRS. THE GOVERNMENT IS DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT SOME 100,000 OCCUPATIONAL ACCIDENTS OCCURRED IN 1991, 48,000 ACCIDENTS IN INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS. THESE FIGURES ARE UNACCEPTABLY HIGH. WE WILL SPARE NO EFFORT IN SEEKING TO BRING IT RIGHT DOWN. BUT WE WILL NEED THE CO-OPERATION OF ALL CONCERNED, PARTICULARLY EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES, IF WE ARE TO MAKE ANY REAL PROGRESS.

OCCUPATIONAL ACCIDENTS ARE A PROBLEM FOR EVERYBODY. THEY CAUSE MUCH SUFFERING AND HARDSHIP TO THE AFFECTED EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES. TO EMPLOYERS THEY MEAN LOST PRODUCTIVITY, REDUCED OUTPUT AND COMPENSATION BILLS OR HIGHER INSURANCE PREMIA. AS FOR THE GOVERNMENT, EVERY NEW INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT BRINGS MORE CRITICISM AND PRESSURE FOR ACTION. SO ALL OF US HAVE A VESTED INTEREST IN PREVENTING INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS FROM HAPPENING.

#### INDUSTRIAL SAFETY : MONITORING AND PROSECUTION

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LET ME TURN TO THE MOTION BEFORE US TODAY. IT HAS FOUR OPERATIVE PARTS. THE FIRST PART URGES THE ADMINISTRATION TO ENHANCE MONITORING AND STEP UP PROSECUTIONS. THIS IS AN AREA TO WHICH THE JOINT STEERING COMMITTEE DEVOTED ONE WHOLE CHAPTER OF ITS REPORT.

THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT IS GENERALLY WELL PLACED FOR THE MONITORING FUNCTION. ENFORCEMENT OF SAFETY AND HEALTH REGULATIONS UNDER THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS ORDINANCE AND REGULATIONS IN THE 92,000 FACTORIES AND 4,000 CONSTRUCTION SITES IN HONG KONG IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FACTORY INSPECTORATE DIVISION OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT WHICH HAS AN ESTABLISHMENT OF 217 STAFF. THEY WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE STAFF OF THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH DIVISION WHOSE EXPERTISE HAS ALWAYS BEEN CALLED UPON IN INVESTIGATING SERIOUS ACCIDENTS INVOLVING HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS, OR UNKNOWN FUMES AND CAISSON WORK. NEARLY 72,000 INSPECTIONS WERE MADE IN 1991 RESULTING IN 2,101 PROSECUTIONS AND FINES TALLING OVER \$12 MILLION, COMPARED WITH 69,000 INSPECTIONS, 1,931 PROSECUTIONS AND FINES OF OVER \$11 MILLION IN 1990.

BUT WHILE PROSECUTION CAN AND WILL BE STEPPED UP WHERE WARRANTED, IT IS NOT THE REAL ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM. OUR CONCERN MUST BE TO KEEP THE RISKS OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS TO A MINIMUM. THIS DEPENDS GREATLY ON THE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR OF EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES. THIS IS WHY THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT'S STRATEGY FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF WORKPLACE SAFETY HAS PLACED INCREASING EMPHASIS ON EDUCATING EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-REGULATION AT THE WORKPLACE. WE BELIEVE THAT PUTTING THE EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION AND PUBLICITY, AND SUPPORTING IT WITH VIGOROUS INSPECTION AND PROSECUTION, IS THE RIGHT STRATEGY.

CODES OF SAFETY PRACTICES  
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THE SECOND PART OF THE MOTION URGES THE ADMINISTRATION TO FORMULATE, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, CODES OF SAFETY PRACTICES FOR VARIOUS TRADES AND TO CONSIDER INTRODUCING LEGISLATION TO REQUIRE VARIOUS TRADES, IN PARTICULAR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, TO SET UP 'SAFETY COMMITTEES'.

THIS WORK IS ACTUALLY ON-GOING. TO DATE, THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT HAS PUBLISHED 10 CODES OF PRACTICE COVERING INDUSTRIAL PROCESSES IN PLASTICS, SHIPBUILDING AND SHIP-REPAIR, COTTON SPINNING, LEAD SMELTING, POWER PRESS OPERATION, DIVING, TUNNELLING, QUARRYING AND ASBESTOS WORK, AS WELL AS PROTECTION OF HEARING IN NOISY PROCESSES. ANOTHER 10 CODES ARE BEING DRAWN UP FOR THE MAJOR TYPES OF BOILERS AND PRESSURE EQUIPMENT. THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT WILL BE DRAWING UP GUIDELINES ON OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE LIMITS (OELS) FOR THE 231 CHEMICALS ALREADY LISTED IN THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES) REGULATIONS. AS RECOMMENDED BY THE JOINT STEERING COMMITTEE, THE GUIDELINES WILL BE WRITTEN IN SIMPLE LAYMEN'S LANGUAGE AND DIFFERENT GUIDELINES WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO DIFFERENT TRADES AND INDUSTRIES TO CATER FOR THEIR SPECIFIC NEEDS. THE EIGHT INDUSTRY-BASED TRIPARTITE COMMITTEES OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH COUNCIL ARE ALSO ACTIVELY PRODUCING OR UPDATING GUIDELINES ON SAFETY PRACTICES FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE INDUSTRIES.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, THE JOINT STEERING COMMITTEE HAS RECOMMENDED THAT THE EXISTING STATUTORY PROVISIONS ON SAFETY WOULD BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE IF THEY COULD BE REGULARLY UPDATED TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF LATEST INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AND PRACTICES. A PRACTICAL WAY TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL IS TO LIFT THE DETAILED STANDARDS AND ADVICE OUT OF THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS REGULATIONS AND PUBLISH THEM AS FREE-STANDING CODES OF PRACTICE OR GUIDES FOR INDUSTRY. IT WILL BE EASIER AND FASTER TO UPDATE SUCH CODES OR GUIDES THAN TO AMEND STATUTORY REGULATIONS. THIS IS THE NEW DIRECTION IN WHICH THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT WILL BE WORKING.

ON THE QUESTION OF SETTING UP 'SAFETY COMMITTEES', THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY HAS BEEN TO ENCOURAGE RATHER THAN TO COMPEL. SO FAR, 238 COMPANIES MOST OF WHICH EMPLOYING MORE THAN 100 STAFF HAVE ESTABLISHED SAFETY COMMITTEES. IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR, SAFETY COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED IN 50 LEADING CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES WHICH TOGETHER EMPLOY OVER 80% OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN HONG KONG. FOLLOWING THE JOINT STEERING COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION, WE ARE EXPLORING THE FEASIBILITY OF REQUIRING THE SETTING UP OF SAFETY COMMITTEES IN LARGER ESTABLISHMENTS. TO THIS END, THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT WILL BE CONSULTING THE INDUSTRIES CONCERNED, PARTICULARLY THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR, BEFORE PUTTING FORWARD PROPOSALS FOR ENDORSEMENT BY THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD.

THE ADMINISTRATION RECOGNIZES THE MERIT OF SAFETY COMMITTEES AS A MEANS OF FORGING CLOSER COOPERATION BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES IN THE PREVENTION OF OCCUPATIONAL ACCIDENTS. HOWEVER, SOME 86% OF BUSINESSES IN HONG KONG ARE SMALL UNDERTAKINGS EMPLOYING FEWER THAN 20 WORKERS. THEY MAY HAVE VARYING DEGREES OF PRACTICAL DIFFICULTY IN FORMING SAFETY COMMITTEES. WE WILL NEED TO CONSIDER HOW TO TACKLE THIS PROBLEM.

INDUSTRIAL SAFETY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR  
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THE THIRD PART OF THE MOTION CONCERNS INDUSTRIAL SAFETY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR. I SHALL DEFER TO MY COLLEAGUE THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS TO COMMENT ON THIS ASPECT.

INDUSTRIAL SAFETY EDUCATION  
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THE FOURTH PART OF THE MOTION URGES THE ADMINISTRATION TO STRENGTHEN EDUCATIONAL AND PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES IN INDUSTRIAL SAFETY. WE FULLY ACCEPT THE NEED FOR DOING THIS.

THE INDUSTRIAL SAFETY TRAINING CENTRE OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT RUNS REGULAR COURSES FOR MANAGERS, TECHNICIANS, FOREMEN AND OTHER SUPERVISORY STAFF TO EQUIP THEM WITH THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE TO TACKLE SAFETY PROBLEMS. OF THE 30 COURSES ON OFFER NOW, 21 ARE RELATED TO CONSTRUCTION SAFETY.

THE CONCEPT OF INDUSTRIAL SAFETY HAS ALREADY BEEN INTRODUCED INTO SECONDARY SCHOOLS UNDER THE GENERAL CONCEPT OF SAFETY EDUCATION. BOOKLETS AND POSTERS ON SAFETY IN LABORATORIES AND WORKSHOPS, AND GENERAL SCHOOL CIRCULARS ON SAFETY MEASURES IN THE TEACHING OF CERTAIN SUBJECTS AND THE CONDUCT OF EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, HAVE BEEN ISSUED BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT. IN ADDITION, THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT, HAS ESTABLISHED A COMMITTEE FOR THE PROMOTION OF INDUSTRIAL SAFETY IN SCHOOLS. THESE ACTIVITIES ARE SUPPLEMENTED BY SAFETY TALKS TO STUDENTS AND SEMINARS FOR CAREER TEACHERS TO ENABLE THEM TO HELP SPREAD THE SAFETY MESSAGE. IN ADDITION, THERE IS AN ANNUAL "BOOK MARK DESIGN COMPETITION ON INDUSTRIAL SAFETY" FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS, AS WELL AS ACTIVITIES ORGANISED FOR THE COMMUNITY YOUTH CLUB. THESE ACTIVITIES WILL BE FURTHER STRENGTHENED.

LET ME REITERATE IN CONCLUSION THAT THE GOVERNMENT FULLY RECOGNIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AND WILL SPARE NO EFFORT IN PROMOTING AND ACHIEVING IT. BUT THERE IS A LIMIT TO WHAT THE GOVERNMENT ALONE CAN ACHIEVE. THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR A SAFE AND HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT RESTS PRIMARILY WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES THEMSELVES. THEY, MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE, HAVE A VESTED INTEREST IN ENSURING SAFETY. I URGE THEM TO PLAY THEIR FULL PART, AS WE IN THE GOVERNMENT WILL PLAY OURS.

THANK YOU, MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT.

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SECRETARY FOR WORKS ON INDUSTRIAL SAFETY

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MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT,

A BASIC CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TO CONSTRUCTION SAFETY IS NOW APPARENT. THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH OF LEAVING THE PROBLEM TO THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT, AS THE LAW ENFORCER, AND TO THE CONTRACTOR, THROUGH A FEW GENERAL PROVISIONS IN THE CONTRACT, IS NOW SEEN AS JUST NOT GOOD ENOUGH. THE DEVELOPER MUST TAKE A POSITIVE INTEREST AND BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN MAKING THE CONSTRUCTION SITE A SAFE PLACE TO WORK. GOVERNMENT BEING A MAJOR DEVELOPER, IT FOLLOWS THAT WE SHOULD TAKE A LEADING ROLE IN RAISING THE GENERAL AWARENESS OF SITE SAFETY.

AS WE HAVE BEEN REMINDED TODAY BY SPEAKERS ACCIDENT RATES ARE AT AN UNACCEPTABLY HIGH LEVEL. WORKERS CONTINUE TO BE KILLED OR SERIOUSLY INJURED, AND THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY WITH GOVERNMENT ALSO IN THE LEAD MUST INTENSIFY ITS EFFORTS TO FIND SOLUTIONS.

CONSTRUCTION SITES INEVITABLY ARE POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS, AND 'THINKING SAFE' MUST BE ONE OF MANAGERMENTS' TOP PRIORITIES AND BE INSTILLED INTO THE ACTIONS OF EACH AND EVERY INDIVIDUAL WHO ENTERS ANY CONSTRUCTION SITE. THIS MUST BE PART OF THEIR DAILY ROUTINE. AND THIS AWARENESS OF SAFETY MUST BE REFLECTED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE SPECTRUM OF CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES.

GOVERNMENT'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE 'THINK SAFE' MESSAGE IS INDIRECT, BECAUSE IT IS NOT PART OF THE CULTURE OF ORGANISING WORKS ON SITE. WE ARE HOWEVER ABLE TO LOOK FOR COMMITMENTS AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS, WHICH ARE NEEDED TO IMPOSE 'THINK SAFE' ON EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.

THE GOVERNOR, IN HIS SPEECH TO THE HONG KONG INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERS IN MARCH THIS YEAR, IN FRONT OF THE MORE THAN 1,000 SENIOR PEOPLE FROM THE INDUSTRY, STATED: "WE MUST IMPROVE THE SAFETY RECORD IN CONSTRUCTION. THERE ARE FAR TOO MANY INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS IN CONSTRUCTION. FAR TOO MANY PEOPLE EVEN LOSE THEIR LIVES IN ACCIDENTS ON CONSTRUCTION SITES." SPEAKING AT THE ANNUAL CONSTRUCTION SAFETY CONFERENCE LAST NOVEMBER AND REFERRING TO THE ACCIDENT STATISTICS OF THE LAST FIVE YEARS I SAID: "FRANKLY, THESE STATISTICS ARE SHAMEFUL TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US INVOLVED IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY".

THESE STATEMENTS ECHO GOVERNMENT'S FIRM COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING SAFETY IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY. THE WORKS BRANCH AND DEPARTMENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR PUBLIC WORKS, ARE CONTINUING TO REVIEW WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ACHIEVE BETTER SITE SAFETY ON PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS. IN THIS REGARD, WE SHARE THE VIEWS EXPRESSED THIS EVENING THAT SAFE WORKING PRACTICES DEMAND STRONG INVOLVEMENT NOT ONLY FROM GOVERNMENT BUT ALSO FROM EMPLOYEES, PRIVATE EMPLOYERS, DESIGNERS AND PRIVATE DEVELOPERS ALIKE.

/WE HAVE .....

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WE HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY PREPARING A SITE SAFETY MANUAL FOR THE AIRPORT CORE PROGRAMME PROJECTS. THE DRAFT HAS ALREADY BEEN CIRCULATED BY NAPCO. THE APPROACH ADOPTED FOR THE ACP PROJECTS IS -

- (A) TO SECURE THE ABSOLUTE COMMITMENT OF ALL PARTIES INVOLVED, INCLUDING WORKS DEPARTMENTS, CONSULTANTS, CONTRACTORS, SUB-CONTRACTORS AND WORKERS UNIONS;
- (B) TO ENFORCE PROVISIONS REQUIRING CONTRACTORS TO PREPARE AND IMPLEMENT A SITE SAFETY PLAN WHICH LOOKS AHEAD AT SAFETY RISKS FOR PREVENTATIVE ACTION TO BE MONITORED BY THE SITE SUPERVISORY STAFF;
- (C) TO ARRANGE ACCIDENT PREVENTION AND SAFETY TRAINING;
- (D) TO ESTABLISH CONTRACT SITE SAFETY COMMITTEES;
- (E) TO ESTABLISH AN ACP SITE SAFETY STEERING COMMITTEE, INVOLVING MYSELF, WORKS DEPARTMENTS, LABOUR DEPARTMENT, NAPCO, HONG KONG CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION AND OTHERS SUCH AS THE PAA AND REPRESENTATIVES OF MTRC FORGING A BRIDGE BOTH GOVERNMENT AND THE CONTRACTOR CONSORTIUM WILL ENGAGE IN ENGINEERS EXPERIENCED IN THE SAFE WORKING PRACTICES NEEDED FOR BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION OF THIS TYPE;
- (F) WE SHALL ALSO PUBLISH THE SITE SAFETY MANUAL TO ASSIST WORKS DEPARTMENTS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF SITE SAFETY MATTERS ON ACP CONTRACTS.

BUT THE ACP CONTRACTS PROVIDE A SHARP WEDGE WHICH WILL BE DRIVEN HOME TO BENEFIT OTHER NON-ACP PUBLIC WORKS CONTRACTS. MEASURES WHICH ALREADY APPLY TO PUBLIC WORKS CONTRACTS INCLUDE:

- (A) QUARTERLY REPORTING ON CONTRACTORS, WHICH INCLUDES SAFETY PERFORMANCE AND THE REGULAR REVIEW OF CONTRACTORS' SAFETY RECORDS. ANY MAJOR SITE SAFETY PROBLEMS INVOLVED URGENT HIGH LEVEL MANAGEMENT DISCUSSIONS TO RECTIFY THE SITUATION. POOR SITE SAFETY PERFORMANCE WILL ALSO ADVERSELY AFFECT THE ELIGIBILITY OF A CONTRACTOR TO TENDER FOR FURTHER GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS.
- (B) IN LARGER GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS, A WEEKLY REPORT IS PREPARED BY THE SAFETY OFFICER IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (SAFETY OFFICERS AND SAFETY SUPERVISORS) REGULATIONS SO THAT MONITORING CAN BE CARRIED OUT BY THE SITE STAFF AND THE ENGINEER. SETTING UP OF "SAFETY COMMITTEES" ON SITE BY THE CONTRACTOR IS ALSO ACTIVELY PROMOTED.
- (C) GUIDELINES ENSURE THAT ALL SITE STAFF RECEIVE SUITABLE TRAINING AND CONTINUING SAFETY EDUCATION.

/(D) WORKS .....

- (D) WORKS BRANCH RECEIVES RETURNS ON ACCIDENTS ON CONSTRUCTION SITES ON QUARTERLY BASIS AND WORKS DEPARTMENT ARE REQUIRED TO CLOSELY MONITOR CONTRACTS IF THERE IS A HIGH OCCURRENCE OF ACCIDENTS. THE EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG TRAINEES BY THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TRAINING AUTHORITY AND THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL INCLUDES INSTRUCTION ON SAFE WORKING AND THE USE OF SAFETY EQUIPMENT.

WE ARE ALSO CONSIDERING:

- (A) INSPECTION TEAMS, COMPRISING GOVERNMENT, THE CONTRACTOR AND SUB-CONTRACTORS, TO JUDGE WHETHER THE REQUIRED SAFETY MEASURES ARE BEING ACHIEVED. INDEPENDENT AUDITS MAY BE CARRIED OUT ON LARGER SITES.
- (B) MEANS TO ENSURE THAT CONTRACTORS CLEARLY UNDERSTAND WHAT IS REQUIRED OF THEM SO THAT THEY CAN PRICE THEIR TENDERS IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT ALL CONTRACTORS WILL BE TREATED IN THE SAME WAY ARE ALSO IN HAND.
- (C) INTRODUCTION OF INCENTIVES AS WELL AS PENALTIES FOR CONTRACTORS AND SUB-CONTRACTORS ARE BEING CONSIDERED.
- (D) CONTRACTORS MUST ALSO HAVE AN APPROVED SAFETY POLICY, NOT ONLY TO GAIN ENTRY BUT ALSO TO MAINTAIN THEIR STATUS AS AN APPROVED CONTRACTOR ON OUR LISTS. PERFORMANCE ON SAFETY WILL BE GIVEN MUCH GREATER PROMINENCE IN DECIDING WHETHER REGULATING ACTIONS, SUCH AS SUSPENSION FROM TENDERING, SHOULD BE TAKEN.

IN OUTLINING THESE MEASURES TO YOU, I MUST AVOID GIVING ANY IMPRESSION THAT UNTIL RECENTLY NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE TO IMPROVE CONSTRUCTION SAFETY. THIS IS CERTAINLY NOT THE CASE. FROM MY OWN DIRECT EXPERIENCE, I CAN ASSURE MEMBERS THAT THE INDUSTRY IS VERY MUCH AWARE OF THE NEED AND HAS MADE CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS TO PROMOTE THE CAUSE OF SITE SAFETY. WHAT WE ARE NOW PRESSING FOR IS A CONTINUATION AND A FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF THESE EFFORTS.

BUT I MUST UNDERLINE THE VIEWS OF SPEAKERS WHO WARN THAT THE NATURE OF THE SAFETY PROBLEMS SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. CONCERTED EFFORTS FROM ALL PARTIES INVOLVED: GOVERNMENT, DEVELOPERS, CONTRACTORS, SUB-CONTRACTORS AND WORKERS WILL BE NEEDED TO BRING THE PROBLEM UNDER CONTROL. GOVERNMENT IN ITS ROLE AS A MAJOR DEVELOPER CAN AND WILL CONTINUE TO PROMOTE THE 'THINK SAFE' MESSAGE, AND WILL ALSO USE EVERY AVAILABLE MEANS TO INFLUENCE PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPERS, WHO MUST ALSO PLAY THEIR PART.

THANK YOU MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT.

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SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS ON ADVISORY BODIES

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MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT,

I THANK ALL MEMBERS WHO HAVE SPOKEN FOR THE VIEWS THEY HAVE EXPRESSED. IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE IN THE TIME AVAILABLE TO DEAL WITH ALL OF THESE POINTS, THOUGH, I WOULD LIKE TO ASSURE MEMBERS THAT I HAVE TAKEN CAREFUL NOTE OF THEM ALL. THERE IS A WIDE VARIETY OF STATUTORY BODIES AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES. SOME OF THEM ARE ESTABLISHED FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING EXPERT ADVICE TO THE GOVERNMENT ON THEIR PARTICULAR AREAS OF CONCERN. OTHERS ARE ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE A SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT WHERE IT IS CONSIDERED THAT THE MANAGEMENT FLEXIBILITY OFFERED BY A BODY OUTSIDE THE CIVIL SERVICE IS CONDUCIVE TO MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE PROVISION OF SERVICE. STILL OTHERS ARE ESTABLISHED TO PROMOTE GREATER COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION. TOGETHER THEY FORM A KEY FEATURE OF OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT, AS PRACTISED OVER THE YEARS, WHICH ALLOWS US TO DRAW ON THE BEST TALENTS AND EXPERTISE THAT IS AVAILABLE IN THE COMMUNITY. THAT SYSTEM EVOLVES OVER TIME : IT DOES NOT STAND STILL. NEW BODIES AND COMMITTEES ARE CREATED FROM TIME TO TIME TO MEET THE COMPLEX NEEDS OF ADMINISTERING A MODERN SOCIETY OF 5.8 MILLION PEOPLE. OLD ONES ARE MODIFIED, OR REPLACED. THERE ARE CURRENTLY OVER 400 STATUTORY BODIES AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES.

GIVEN THE LARGE NUMBER AND WIDE VARIETY OF STATUTORY BODIES AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES, IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE TO IMPOSE UNIFORM AND INFLEXIBLE RULES ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS. TO TAKE ACCOUNTABILITY FIRST. IN ESSENCE, ALL STATUTORY BODIES AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES ARE ESTABLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT, SO STRICTLY SPEAKING IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT THEY ARE ALL ACCOUNTABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE DISCHARGE OF THEIR FUNCTIONS. BUT THAT IS A HIGHLY SIMPLIFIED WAY OF LOOKING AT THE ISSUE. ULTIMATELY, IN AN OPEN SOCIETY LIKE HONG KONG ALL BODIES WHICH PERFORM A PUBLIC FUNCTION ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO THE COMMUNITY. SOME OF THEM MAY NOT DO SO DIRECTLY, FOR EXAMPLE THROUGH A SYSTEM OF ELECTIONS. BUT THEY ARE SUBJECT, AS IS THE GOVERNMENT, TO PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CRITICISMS, EXPRESSED DIRECTLY TO THEM BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC, OR INDIRECTLY THROUGH THE MEDIA, OR THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND OTHER REPRESENTATIVE BODIES. INDEED THERE ARE ARRANGEMENTS WHEREBY REPORTS OF STATUTORY BODIES ARE LAID BEFORE THIS COUNCIL, AND IT IS OPEN FOR THIS COUNCIL TO DEBATE OR COMMENT ON THEM.

MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT, I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A MAJOR CAUSE FOR CONCERN ON THE GOVERNMENT'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THESE STATUTORY AND ADVISORY BODIES. THERE ARE WELL KNOWN PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THAT RELATIONSHIP :

- IT IS THE GOVERNMENT THAT ULTIMATELY DETERMINES POLICY.
- IT IS THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT ENACTS THE LAWS AND APPROVES THE FUNDS FOR THESE BODIES WHERE SUCH LAWS AND FUNDS ARE NECESSARY.

- WHERE QUESTIONS ARE RAISED BY THIS COUNCIL ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THESE BODIES/COMMITTEES, THE GOVERNMENT HAS TO ANSWER FOR THEM.

I NOTE THAT DR HUANG AND MR TIK WOULD LIKE THIS TO BE DONE BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF STATUTORY BODIES. BUT THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT FOR POLICY SECRETARIES TO DEAL WITH SUCH QUESTIONS REFLECT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE RELEVANT STATUTORY BODIES AS WELL AS THE FACT THAT THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IS ANSWERABLE TO THE LEGISLATURE FOR ALL ASPECTS OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES INCLUDING THOSE UNDERTAKING ON ITS BEHALF BY STATUTORY BODIES. THE RELEVANT SECRETARY WILL OF COURSE CONSULT THE STATUTORY BODIES CONCERNED BEFORE PROVIDING ANY ANSWER OR INFORMATION TO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON MATTERS AFFECTING THESE BODIES.

WITHIN THESE BROAD PARAMETERS, THE DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS GOVERNING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTICULAR BODIES OR COMMITTEES ARE OF COURSE ADAPTED AND REFINED, HAVING REGARD TO THE NATURE OF THEIR ACTIVITIES AND THE NEEDS OF THE TIME. CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS ARE MADE AS CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANT, NOT ONLY IN THEIR PRECISE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT BUT ALSO IN THEIR STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION. ONE AREA WHICH WE ARE CURRENTLY LOOKING AT IS THE FEASIBILITY OF DEFINING THE PRECISE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND SOME STATUTORY BODIES MORE CLEARLY. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD DEAL WITH THESE RELATIONSHIPS PRAGMATICALLY, RATHER THAN MAKING CHANGES FOR DOCTRINAL REASONS. WE SHOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO LOOK OVER EVERYTHING THAT THEY DO, AND HOW THEY DO IT, FOR WE RISK DESTROYING THE VERY FLEXIBILITY THAT WE WISH TO ACHIEVE IN SETTING UP STATUTORY BODIES. WE MUST HANDLE THIS WITH CARE AND SENSITIVITY.

TURNING TO DECLARATION OF INTERESTS, THE GOVERNMENT IS OF COURSE FULLY ALIVE TO THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT DECISIONS ARE MADE IMPARTIALLY, AND THAT AS FAR AS POSSIBLE THE INTERESTS OF MEMBERS OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN CONSIDERING THEIR VIEWS AND ADVICE. HONG KONG IS RELATIVELY A SMALL AND COMPACT PLACE AND IT IS NOT HARD FOR THE INTERESTS OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE KNOWN, WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE OFFICIALLY DECLARED. SOMETIMES, INDEED, WE APPOINT INDIVIDUALS TO REPRESENT SPECIFIC INTERESTS TO BOARDS AND COMMITTEES IN ORDER THAT THOSE INTERESTS MIGHT BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, E.G. THE RICE ADVISORY BOARD WHERE A NOMINEE OF THE CONSUMER COUNCIL LOOKS AFTER THE INTERESTS OF THE CONSUMER. OTHER CASES WE NEED TO DRAW ON THE EXPERTISE OF THE PRACTITIONERS IN THE PARTICULAR FIELD OF ACTIVITY, WHICH WOULD MAKE IT NECESSARY TO APPOINT INDIVIDUALS WITH A PARTICULAR BACKGROUND AND INTEREST. THUS ALL MEMBERS OF THE TEXTILES ADVISORY BOARD ARE MANUFACTURERS OR EXPORTERS OF TEXTILES AND GARMENTS WITH IN-DEPTH KNOWLEDGE OF THAT INDUSTRY. THIS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT FOR THEY ACT AS INDUSTRIAL ADVISERS TO HONG KONG'S TRADE NEGOTIATORS. THESE ARE DOCUMENTED IN THE CIVIL AND MISCELLANEOUS LISTS, AND IT IS QUITE EASY TO FIND OUT.

/THAT IS .....

THAT IS NOT TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THERE IS NOT A PLACE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOME SYSTEM OF DECLARATION OF INTERESTS WHERE IT IS NEEDED. THERE ARE INDEED ELABORATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR DECLARATION OF INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS AND THE DISTRICT BOARDS. THIS REFLECTS ALSO THE IMPORTANT POSITION THAT SUCH BODIES OCCUPY IN THE COMMUNITY. MOST STATUTORY AUTHORITIES/CORPORATIONS ALREADY HAVE SOME PROVISIONS, EITHER IN LAW OR IN ADMINISTRATIVE RULES, ON THE NEED TO DECLARE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST. AND THE ICAC HAS JUST FORMULATED SOME GUIDANCE NOTES ON CONFLICTS OF INTEREST FOR ADVISORY COMMITTEES WHICH WILL BE FURTHER PURSUED. BUT I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT WE NEED TO IMPOSE A UNIFORM AND ELABORATE SYSTEM ON ALL BOARDS AND COMMITTEES. QUITE APART FROM BEING ADMINISTRATIVELY CUMBERSOME, AND POSSIBLY COSTLY, WE MUST TAKE CARE THAT WE DO NOT DAMPEN THE ENTHUSIASM OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS. WE SHOULD LOOK AT EACH CASE ON ITS MERITS, AND DECIDE WHAT ARRANGEMENTS BEST SUIT THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CASE. IN THIS RESPECT, WE WILL AS PART OF OUR ON-GOING PROCESS CONTINUE TO SEE WHERE IMPROVEMENTS MIGHT BE MADE.

A NUMBER OF MEMBERS REFERRED TO THE NEED TO STRIKE A BALANCE IN GOVERNMENT'S APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMITTEES. THERE WERE SUGGESTIONS THAT MORE ELECTED LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS SHOULD BE APPOINTED TO SUCH BODIES. THERE ARE ALSO CONTRARY VIEWS THAT POLITICIANS SHOULD BE BARRED FROM SUCH BODIES. BUT AS I SAID IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION IN THIS COUNCIL EARLIER THIS AFTERNOON, OF APPOINTING THE BEST MAN OR WOMAN TO SERVE ON SUCH COMMITTEES, INDEED, GIVING A SHORT TIME BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 1991 AND TODAY, WE HAVE APPOINTED SOME 15 ELECTED LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS TO SUCH BODIES. ELECTED LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS NOW CHAIRED 12 BOARDS AND COMMITTEES.

MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT, I WOULD AGAIN ON BEHALF OF THE ADMINISTRATION THANK ALL MEMBERS FOR EXPRESSING THEIR INTEREST AND THEIR VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT OF THIS ADJOURNMENT DEBATE. I ASSURE MEMBERS THAT CAREFUL CONSIDERATION WOULD BE GIVEN TO THE VIEWS EXPRESSED. THANK YOU.

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FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS TO EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION SYSTEM  
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PART-TIME DOMESTIC HELPERS WHO ARE INJURED WHILE AT WORK WILL BE ABLE TO CLAIM EMPLOYEES COMPENSATION IF THE EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 IS PASSED INTO LAW.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, SAID PART-TIME DOMESTIC HELPERS WERE CURRENTLY EXCLUDED FROM THE PROTECTION OF THE EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ORDINANCE.

"AS A RESULT, THEY CAN ONLY SEEK REDRESS BY CLAIMING DAMAGES AT COMMON LAW IF THEY ARE INJURED IN THE COURSE OF THEIR WORK," HE SAID.

/"IN VIEW .....

"IN VIEW OF THE INCREASING POPULARITY OF EMPLOYING PART-TIME DOMESTIC HELPERS, WE PROPOSE TO BRING THEM WITHIN THE AMBIT OF THE ORDINANCE."

THE PROPOSED BILL ALSO SEEKS TO RE-DEFINE 'DEPENDANTS' TO INCLUDE CHILDREN OF AN EMPLOYEE BORN AFTER HIS DEATH AND RETIRING PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS WHO ARE LIKELY TO BE DEPENDENT ON THE EARNINGS OF THE DECEASED.

THE CURRENT DEFINITION OF 'DEPENDANTS' IS CONFINED TO DEPENDENCY AT THE TIME OF THE EMPLOYEE'S DEATH.

UNDER THE PROPOSED BILL, THE LEVELS OF PENALTY FOR VARIOUS OFFENCES UNDER THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCE WILL BE REVISED SO THAT OFFENCES OF SIMILAR GRAVITY WILL CARRY THE SAME MAXIMUM PENALTY.

MR CHAN EXPLAINED: "THE REALIGNMENT IS NECESSARY BECAUSE THE PROSECUTABLE OFFENCES WERE BROUGHT IN AT DIFFERENT TIMES BY VARIOUS AMENDMENT ORDINANCES WHICH SET DIFFERENT MAXIMUM PENALTIES.

"AFTER THIS REVISION, THE MAXIMUM FINES WOULD BE SET UNIFORMLY AT \$5,000, \$10,000 AND \$20,000, DEPENDING ON THE SEVERITY OF THE OFFENCES.

"THE MAXIMUM FINE OF \$50,000 WOULD BE RETAINED FOR THE MOST SERIOUS OFFENCES OF FAILING TO SECURE INSURANCE COVER OR TO PRODUCE AN INSURANCE POLICY FOR INSPECTION."

THE EXISTING PENALTIES INVOLVING CUSTODIAL SENTENCES WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY THE AMENDMENT BILL, HE ADDED.

MR CHAN ALSO INTRODUCED A NUMBER OF MINOR AMENDMENTS TO THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCE. THESE INCLUDE:

- \* CLARIFY THE TIME LIMITS WITHIN WHICH AN EMPLOYER MUST EFFECT COMPENSATION PAYMENT TO HIS EMPLOYEE OR ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT OF COMPENSATION WITH HIM;
- \* ALLOW AN EMPLOYER TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF ADVANCE PAYMENT IN DESERVING CASES AND DEDUCT IT AFTERWARDS FROM THE FINAL COMPENSATION THAT THE COURT OR THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR MAY ORDER;
- \* EXTEND THE APPLICATION OF THE ORDINANCE TO AN EMPLOYEE INJURED WHILE WORKING FOR A FOREIGN EMPLOYER OUTSIDE HONG KONG, IF THAT FOREIGN EMPLOYER VOLUNTARILY SUBMITS HIS CASE TO THE JURISDICTION OF THE HONG KONG COURT;
- \* ENABLE AN ORDINARY ASSESSMENT BOARD TO ASSESS THE OVERALL PERIOD OF ABSENCE FROM DUTY NECESSARY AS A RESULT OF THE INJURY; AND
- \* PROVIDE THAT COMPENSATION PAYABLE UNDER THE ORDINANCE TO A LEGALLY AIDED PERSON IS SUBJECT TO THE FIRST CHARGE PROVISION IN THE LEGAL AID ORDINANCE.

MR CHAN SAID THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

NEW PROCEDURES TO SETTLE COMPENSATION IN MINOR ACCIDENTS PROPOSED

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A BILL THAT SEEKS TO PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE TO EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES IN SETTLING COMPENSATION IN CASES OF MINOR INJURY INVOLVING ABSENCE FROM DUTY OF NOT MORE THAN SEVEN DAYS WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1992, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, SAID UNDER THE PROPOSED BILL, AN EMPLOYER MAY AGREE WITH HIS EMPLOYEE ON THE AMOUNT OF COMPENSATION TO BE PAID WITHOUT THE NEED FOR MEDICAL CLEARANCE AT THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT.

"THE KIND OF AGREEMENT CONTEMPLATED IS OF A VERY SIMPLE AND STRAIGHT-FORWARD NATURE AND MAY TAKE EITHER A WRITTEN OR VERBAL FORM," MR CHAN SAID.

"TO SAFEGUARD THE INTEREST OF THE EMPLOYEE, THE BILL REQUIRES THE EMPLOYER TO REPORT THE ACCIDENT AND ALSO THE AMOUNT OF COMPENSATION AGREED WITH THE EMPLOYEE TO THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR WITHIN 14 DAYS AFTER THE ACCIDENT.

"THE COMMISSIONER WILL SEE TO IT THAT THE COMPENSATION AGREED DOES NOT FALL SHORT OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE ORDINANCE. IF NECESSARY, THE COMMISSIONER MAY CANCEL THE AGREEMENT AND SUBSTITUTE HIS ASSESSMENT INSTEAD."

SHOULD THE EMPLOYER AND THE EMPLOYEE FAIL TO REACH AN AGREEMENT UNDER THE NEW PROCEDURES, HE ADDED, THE COMPENSATION CLAIM CAN STILL BE PROCESSED IN THE OLD MANNER.

AT PRESENT, THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT OPERATES A TWO-TIER SYSTEM OF MEDICAL CLEARANCE AND ASSESSMENT TO ASCERTAIN THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF INJURY SUSTAINED BY AN EMPLOYEE.

MEDICAL STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT INTERVIEW EVERY INJURED EMPLOYEE IN THE FIRST INSTANCE AND WHERE THE INJURY IS CONSIDERED LIKELY TO RESULT IN PERMANENT INCAPACITY, THEY REFER THE INJURED TO A STATUTORY ASSESSMENT BOARD.

MR CHAN CONSIDERED THIS SYSTEM OF MEDICAL CLEARANCE AND ASSESSMENT USEFUL IN CASES INVOLVING INJURY OF A MORE SERIOUS NATURE.

BUT FOR MINOR CASES INVOLVING ONLY A FEW DAYS' SICK LEAVE, IT IS OBVIOUSLY A WASTE OF TIME AND MONEY TO REQUIRE THE EMPLOYEES TO TAKE LEAVE FOR MEDICAL CLEARANCE AT THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT AND REQUIRE THEIR EMPLOYERS TO PAY THEM WAGES FOR THE ABSENCE FROM DUTY.

MR CHAN ADDED THAT THE NEW PROCEDURES DID NOT DEPRIVE EMPLOYEES OF EXISTING CHANNELS OF REDRESS, BUT OFFERED THE ADDED ADVANTAGE OF A SPEEDIER MECHANISM FOR SETTLEMENT OF MINOR INJURY CLAIMS.

THE PROPOSAL HAS THE SUPPORT OF THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD AND THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY IS AGREEABLE TO IT.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 1992

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BILL TO RETAIN LIMITED REGULATION OF BODIES  
AND ASSOCIATIONS INTRODUCED

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A BILL THAT SEEKS TO REPLACE THE SOCIETIES REGISTRATION SYSTEM BY A NOTIFICATION SYSTEM WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE SOCIETIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR IAN STRACHAN, SAID AS IN ANY CIVILISED SOCIETY THE GOVERNMENT WISHED TO PRESERVE THE RIGHT OF INDIVIDUALS TO FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION.

BUT THE GOVERNMENT ALSO NEEDED TO PROTECT CITIZENS FROM CRIMINAL, AND IN PARTICULAR TRIAD ACTIVITIES AND TO ACKNOWLEDGE ITS RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SECURITY, PUBLIC SAFETY AND PUBLIC ORDER AS PERMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS ORDINANCE.

"THUS WE PROPOSE TO RETAIN LIMITED REGULATION OF BODIES AND ASSOCIATIONS," THE SECRETARY SAID.

THE SOCIETIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 REQUIRES ALL SOCIETIES AND ASSOCIATIONS WHICH ARE NOT OTHERWISE APPROVED OR REGULATED TO NOTIFY THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE OF THEIR ESTABLISHMENT NOT LATER THAN 14 DAYS AFTER FORMATION.

FAILURE TO NOTIFY WILL BE AN OFFENCE BUT SOCIETIES WHICH DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENT WILL NOT BE REGARDED AS UNLAWFUL AUTOMATICALLY.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT IS CONFIDENT THAT THIS ARRANGEMENT WOULD BE COMPATIBLE WITH THE BILL OF RIGHTS ORDINANCE.

THE PRESENT ORDINANCE EMPOWERS THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE TO REFUSE TO REGISTER A SOCIETY ON A NUMBER OF SPECIFIED GROUNDS, INCLUDING WHERE A SOCIETY IS CONNECTED WITH AN OVERSEAS POLITICAL ORGANISATION.

MR STRACHAN POINTED OUT THAT THE BILL PROPOSED TO SUBSTITUTE THIS BY A PROVISION WHEREBY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY MIGHT PROHIBIT THE OPERATION OF A SOCIETY IF HE CONSIDERS IT NECESSARY IN THE INTERESTS OF SECURITY, PUBLIC SAFETY AND PUBLIC ORDER.

"THIS REQUIREMENT IS NECESSARY TO DEAL WITH CRIMINAL AND OTHER UNDESIRABLE SOCIETIES WHOSE OPERATIONS ARE PREJUDICIAL TO THE WELL-BEING OF HONG KONG," HE SAID.

"IT IS, FOR EXAMPLE, ESTABLISHED POLICY THAT WE DO NOT WANT HONG KONG TO BE USED BY OUTSIDERS FOR THEIR POLITICAL BATTLES AGAINST CHINA."

AT THE SAME TIME, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD LIKE TO REAFFIRM THAT HONG KONG PEOPLE HAD FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND THAT AS LONG AS THEY REMAIN WITHIN THE LAW, IT COULD NOT AND WOULD NOT TAKE ACTION AGAINST THEM, THE SECRETARY SAID.

/MR STRACHAN .....

MR STRACHAN ADDED THAT THESE POLICIES WOULD REMAIN UNCHANGED.

THE BILL ALSO SEEKS TO AMEND CERTAIN PRESUMPTIONS IN THE EXISTING ORDINANCE REGARDING EXISTENCE, MEMBERSHIP, AND MANAGEMENT OF SOCIETIES BY RESTRICTING THEIR APPLICATION TO UNLAWFUL SOCIETIES ONLY.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVED THIS WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE BILL OF RIGHTS ORDINANCE AND YET ENABLE THE POLICE TO CONTINUE WITH THEIR EFFECTIVE FIGHT AGAINST TRIADS.

THE BILL ALSO PROPOSES TO UPDATE FINES FOR VARIOUS TRIAD-RELATED OFFENCES.

THE SECRETARY SAID THERE WERE SUGGESTIONS THAT THE IMPRISONMENT PENALTIES OF SUCH OFFENCES SHOULD LIKEWISE BE REVIEWED TO ENSURE THAT THEY CONTINUE TO BE GOOD DETERRENTS.

"WE SEE MERIT IN THIS AND WILL BE PROPOSING AMENDMENTS TO THIS EFFECT AT THE COMMITTEE STAGE," HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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#### GOVT MOVING TOWARDS GREATER USE OF CHINESE IN COURTS

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IT IS THE GOVERNMENT POLICY TO MOVE TOWARDS GREATER USE OF CHINESE IN THE COURTS, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON JAMES K.S. TO, THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THIS WAS NOW IN PLACE IN THE LOWER COURTS, THAT IS, MAGISTRATES' COURTS AND TRIBUNALS, AND THE CHIEF JUSTICE ENCOURAGED CHINESE-SPEAKING MAGISTRATES TO CONDUCT TRIALS IN CHINESE.

IN THE HIGHER COURTS, BECAUSE OF THE GREATER COMPLEXITY OF THE LEGAL LANGUAGE USED THERE, ENGLISH CONTINUED TO BE THE LANGUAGE IN WHICH THE PROCEEDINGS WERE CONDUCTED.

"INTERPRETATION IS PROVIDED IN ALL CASES WHEN IT IS NEEDED," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID THE CHINESE LANGUAGE WAS USED TO DIFFERENT EXTENTS IN COURTS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS.

ALMOST ALL THE TRIALS CONDUCTED BY SPECIAL MAGISTRATES WERE CONDUCTED IN CHINESE.

THESE TRIALS WERE FOR MINOR OFFENCES SUCH AS HAWKING AND LITTERING AND THEY FORMED A VERY LARGE PROPORTION OF ALL CASES DEALT WITH BY THE COURTS.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF CASES DEALT WITH IN THE SMALL CLAIMS TRIBUNAL AND THE LABOUR TRIBUNAL WERE ALSO CONDUCTED IN CHINESE, HE SAID.

CASES DEALT WITH BY PERMANENT MAGISTRATES MIGHT BE CONDUCTED IN CHINESE OR ENGLISH, OR PARTLY IN CHINESE AND PARTLY IN ENGLISH, DEPENDING ON THE CHOICE OF THE MAGISTRATE AND COUNSEL.

"HOWEVER, NO STATISTICS ARE KEPT," THE CHIEF SECRETARY ADDED.

AS REGARDS THE LANGUAGE USED IN PROCEEDINGS IN HIGHER COURTS, SIR DAVID SAID BECAUSE OF THE GREATER COMPLEXITY OF THE LEGAL LANGUAGE USED, ENGLISH CONTINUED TO BE THE LANGUAGE IN WHICH THE PROCEEDINGS WERE CONDUCTED IN THE DISTRICT AND SUPREME COURT.

NEVERTHELESS, SECTION 5 (3) OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ORDINANCE PROVIDED THAT ANY PARTY OR WITNESS IN ANY PROCEEDINGS IN ANY COURT MIGHT USE EITHER ENGLISH OR CHINESE OR ANY OTHER LANGUAGE AS THE COURT MIGHT PERMIT, HE ADDED.

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#### SLOPES STABILISATION WORKS IN PROGRESS

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A LONG-TERM PROGRAMME OF GEOTECHNICAL STABILITY INVESTIGATIONS HAS BEEN IN PROGRESS DURING THE PAST 16 YEARS TO DEAL WITH 10,000 OR SO SLOPES OR ITEMS THAT HAVE BEEN CATALOGUED ON A RISK PRIORITY BASIS.

OF THE 4,300 INVESTIGATED SO FAR, 880 REQUIRED PREVENTIVE WORKS AND IMPROVEMENT WORKS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED ON 750 SLOPES.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HUANG CHEN-YA, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"OF THE REMAINING 130, ON WHICH PREVENTIVE WORKS ARE IN HAND OR WILL COMMENCE SHORTLY, 35% ARE LOCATED IN THE NEW TERRITORIES, 10% IN KOWLOON AND 55% ON HONG KONG ISLAND," HE SAID.

MR BLAKE EXPLAINED THAT A SLOPE WAS ONLY CLASSIFIED AS DANGEROUS WHEN IT POSED AN IMMEDIATE AND OBVIOUS THREAT TO PUBLIC SAFETY, IN WHICH CASE IMMEDIATE STEPS WERE TAKEN TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM AND REMOVE THE DANGER.

"FOR OTHER SLOPES IT IS ONLY AFTER A DETAILED GEOTECHNICAL STABILITY INVESTIGATION THAT WE KNOW WHETHER OR NOT A SLOPE IS LIABLE TO BECOME DANGEROUS DURING EXTREME RAINSTORMS," HE SAID.

MR BLAKE SAID IF ANY SLOPE WAS OF IMMEDIATE AND OBVIOUS DANGER, IT WAS INJECTED IMMEDIATELY INTO THE LANDSLIP PREVENTIVE MEASURES PROGRAMME AND MONITORED CLOSELY UNTIL WORKS HAD BEEN COMPLETED AND THE SLOPE STABILISED.

/"EMERGENCY MEASURES .....

"EMERGENCY MEASURES WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IF NECESSARY TO SAFEGUARD LIFE PRIOR TO COMPLETION," HE SAID.

FOR PRIVATELY-OWNED SLOPES IDENTIFIED AS REQUIRING PREVENTIVE WORKS, MR BLAKE SAID A STATUTORY ORDER WAS SERVED TO THE OWNERS UNDER THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE.

"THIS REQUIRES THAT AN APPOINTED AUTHORISED PERSON BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING THE STABILITY OF THE SLOPE AND GIVING WARNING OF IMPENDING DANGER UNTIL PREVENTIVE WORKS ARE COMPLETED.

"A COPY OF THE STATUTORY ORDER IS POSTED AT THE SITE TO INFORM OCCUPANTS OF THE SITUATION," HE SAID.

MR BLAKE SAID FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1992/93, LANDSLIP PREVENTIVE WORKS WOULD BE IN PROGRESS ON A TOTAL OF 52 GOVERNMENT SLOPES AND RETAINING WALLS AT AN ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE OF \$66 MILLION.

IT WAS ANTICIPATED THAT PREVENTIVE MEASURES WOULD BE COMPLETED FOR 20 PRIVATE SLOPES.

DURING THE 1991/92 FINANCIAL YEAR, LANDSLIP PREVENTIVE MEASURES WERE COMPLETED AT 34 GOVERNMENT SLOPES AND RETAINING WALLS, AND WORKS STARTED AT 21 OTHERS.

EXPENDITURE ON THE LANDSLIP PREVENTIVE MEASURES PROGRAMME WAS \$62 MILLION.

DURING THE SAME YEAR, PREVENTIVE MEASURES WERE COMPLETED FOR 22 PRIVATE SLOPES.

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#### MEASURES TO FIGHT VIOLENT CRIME ON VARIOUS FRONTS

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THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR IAN STRACHAN, SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO TAKE MEASURES ON A NUMBER OF FRONTS TO PROTECT PUBLIC SAFETY AND ENLIST PUBLIC SUPPORT TO COMBAT VIOLENT CRIME.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON SELINA CHOW IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MR STRACHAN SAID THESE MEASURES INCLUDED MAINTAINING CLOSE LIAISON WITH CHINA, STEPPING UP POLICE PATROLS IN HIGH-RISK AREAS, IMPROVING POLICE EQUIPMENT; AND ENCOURAGING COMMUNITY SUPPORT.

HE SAID OVER THE YEARS THE HONG KONG POLICE AND MAINLAND PUBLIC SECURITY OFFICERS HAD BEEN WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER THROUGH REGULAR CROSS-BORDER LIAISON, VISITS, AND ON OCCASIONS, CO-ORDINATED OPERATIONS.

/HE POINTED .....

HE POINTED OUT THAT ON A RECENT VISIT TO CHINA BY THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, IT WAS AGREED THAT LIAISON BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES SHOULD BE STEPPED UP THROUGH A CHINESE POLICE LIAISON OFFICER BEING STATIONED IN HONG KONG.

ALSO, COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE HONG KONG POLICE AND CHINESE COUNTERPARTS IN GUANGDONG AND SHENZHEN ARE BEING STRENGTHENED TO CO-ORDINATE ACTION IN SERIOUS CASES.

"SUCH MEASURES SHOULD HELP TO ENSURE A BETTER FLOW OF INFORMATION ON THE MOVEMENT OF CRIMINALS AND OF FIREARMS ACROSS THE BORDER," HE SAID.

ON POLICE PATROLS, MR STRACHAN SAID THERE WERE MORE HIGH-PROFILE PATROLS IN HIGH-RISK AREAS AND SWIFT POLICE ACTION HAD RESULTED IN THE ARRESTS OF SEVERAL PERSONS CONNECTED WITH THE RECENT ARMED ROBBERIES.

TURNING TO POLICE EQUIPMENT, HE SAID A NUMBER OF IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED IN A RECENT POLICE REVIEW INCLUDING MORE EFFECTIVE AMMUNITION AND REVOLVERS, SPEED-LOADING EQUIPMENT AND A NEW STYLE OF HOLSTER.

"THE ADMINISTRATION IS CONSIDERING THESE PROPOSALS AS A MATTER OF URGENCY," HE SAID.

HE APPEALED TO THE PUBLIC TO JOIN FORCES WITH POLICE TO FIGHT CRIME, TO REPORT CRIME AND THEN, IF NECESSARY, GIVE EVIDENCE IN COURT.

TO THIS END, THE POLICE HAVE HELD MEETINGS WITH VARIOUS TAXI ASSOCIATIONS TO ENLIST THEIR ASSISTANCE.

DISTRICT FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEES ALSO PROVIDE MANY USEFUL PROPOSALS ON WAYS TO COMBAT CRIME AND HELP DISSEMINATE THE MESSAGE TO LOCAL RESIDENTS.

DESPITE RECENT HIGH-PROFILE CASES OF ARMED ROBBERIES, HE SAID THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF SUCH ROBBERIES HAS DECREASED STEADILY DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF THIS YEAR.

THERE WERE 61 IN JANUARY, 32 IN APRIL.

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#### LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO PROTECT PRIVATE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THERE WAS A LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF PRIVATE SCHOOL STUDENTS.

MR CHAN SAID OPERATING WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK, DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICERS OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT INSPECTED SCHOOLS REGULARLY TO ENSURE THAT THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS WERE MET.

SUBJECT INSPECTORS OF THE DEPARTMENT'S ADVISORY INSPECTORATE ALSO VET THE SYLLABUSES AND TIME-TABLING ARRANGEMENTS OF NEW COURSES AND, IF NECESSARY, THEY WILL ADVISE ON THE SUITABILITY AND ADEQUACY OF TEACHING FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT.

IN ADDITION, CIRCULARS ARE ISSUED TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS FROM TIME TO TIME TO ADVISE THEM ON VARIOUS MATTERS CONCERNING THE OPERATION OF SCHOOLS.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON PEGGY LAM, MR CHAN SAID IF AN OPERATIONAL PROBLEM AROSE IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL OR A COMPLAINT WAS RECEIVED ABOUT ITS OPERATIONS, DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICERS WOULD INVESTIGATE, ADVISE OR TAKE FOLLOW-UP ACTION AS APPROPRIATE.

"WHERE SCHOOL CLOSURE IS INVOLVED, THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT WILL ASSIST THE STUDENTS TO FIND SUITABLE PLACES IN OTHER SCHOOLS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE.

"IN PARTICULAR, LOCAL STUDENTS WHO ARE AGED 15 OR BELOW AND WHO ARE PURSUING A NORMAL PRIMARY OR JUNIOR SECONDARY CURRICULUM IN SUCH A SCHOOL WILL BE OFFERED PLACES IN A SCHOOL OR SCHOOLS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR," MR CHAN SAID.

THE EDUCATION ORDINANCE AND THE EDUCATION REGULATIONS IMPOSE A RANGE OF LEGAL OBLIGATIONS ON OPERATORS OF SCHOOLS, INCLUDING PRIVATE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS, SO AS TO ENSURE THAT:

- \* SCHOOL PREMISES ARE STRUCTURALLY SAFE AND MEET ACCEPTABLE STANDARDS OF FIRE SAFETY, HEALTH AND SANITATION;
- \* EACH SCHOOL IS MANAGED PROPERLY BY A MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE TO ENSURE THAT THE EDUCATION OF PUPILS IS PROMOTED IN A PROPER MANNER;
- \* NO PERSON SHALL TEACH IN A SCHOOL UNLESS HE IS A REGISTERED OR PERMITTED TEACHER;
- \* THE SYLLABUSES, TIMETABLES AND TIME ALLOCATION TABLES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION;
- \* ONLY THE APPROVED INCLUSIVE FEES PUBLISHED IN THE GAZETTE AND ANY ADDITIONAL FEES THAT HAVE HAD THE PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION ARE CHARGED; AND
- \* PROPER ACCOUNTS ARE KEPT BY SCHOOLS AND MADE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND ANY INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS.

MORE THAN 2,900 POSTS SAVED OUT OF STUDIES  
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THE GOVERNMENT HAS CONDUCTED 48 VALUE-FOR-MONEY STUDIES FOR 27 BRANCHES AND DEPARTMENTS IN THE LAST THREE YEARS, RESULTING IN THE SAVING OF MORE THAN 2,900 POSTS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY, MR K.C. KWONG, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK.

MR KWONG SAID ALL THE STUDIES HAD RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENT MEASURES IN TERMS OF STAFFING AND/OR OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES.

EXAMPLES OF THE MEASURES INTRODUCED WERE:

- \* IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY AND THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW ACCOUNTING FRAMEWORK (OPERATING SERVICES ACCOUNT) FOR ELECTRICAL & MECHANICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT WORKSHOPS;
- \* MAJOR ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES TO REGISTRAR GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT;
- \* THE INTRODUCTION OF MODERN OFFICE TECHNOLOGY IN INFORMATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT LEADING TO IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY AND SAVINGS IN STAFF;
- \* IMPROVEMENT TO METHODS AND PROCEDURES FOR STREET-CLEANSING IN BOTH URBAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND REGIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND PROPOSALS TO CONTRACT OUT STREET-CLEANSING LEADING TO SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN PRODUCTIVITY;
- \* SIMPLIFYING HANDLING PROCEDURES AND RELAXING REVIEW CYCLES FOR A VARIETY OF SOCIAL SECURITY ALLOWANCES ENABLING REVISION OF MANNING STANDARDS AND MERGING OF SMALLER FIELD UNITS;
- \* MODIFICATION OF INSPECTION FREQUENCIES, COMPUTERISATION OF FACTORY RECORDS FOR BETTER INSPECTION SCHEDULING AND CONTROLS IN THE WOMEN & YOUNG PERSONS DIVISION OF LABOUR DEPARTMENT;
- \* INTRODUCTION OF MODERN OFFICE EQUIPMENT TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY IN TYPING POOLS;
- \* INTRODUCTION OF A CENTRAL TELEPHONE ENQUIRY SYSTEM IN CNTA TO ENABLE BETTER SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC;
- \* RATIONALISATION OF ACTIVITIES IN PUBLIC ENQUIRY SERVICE CENTRES TO ENABLE THE CLOSING OF SOME UNDERUTILISED PUBLIC ENQUIRY SERVICE CENTRES.

WAITING TIME FOR EYE SURGERIES TO BE REDUCED

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THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY IS PLANNING TO INTEGRATE ITS EXISTING SERVICES WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF OPHTHALMOLOGY IN PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITAL TO PROVIDE A NETWORK OF THREE TERTIARY REFERRAL CENTRES AND EIGHT SECONDARY REFERRAL CENTRES FOR EYE SURGERIES.

THE PLAN WAS OUTLINED BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, DR S.H. LEE, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HENRY TANG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE SAID THIS WOULD LEAD TO BETTER SERVICE CO-ORDINATION AND HELP TO REDUCE THE WAITING TIME FOR OPHTHALMOLOGICAL OPERATIONS.

DR LEE SAID THE WAITING TIME FOR SUCH OPERATIONS DEPEND ON THE NATURE AND SEVERITY OF THE DISEASE INVOLVED.

"WHILE OCULAR EMERGENCIES ARE NORMALLY HANDLED BY THE ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HOSPITALS, URGENT REFERRALS ARE ACCEPTED BY THE ARGYLE STREET OPHTHALMIC CENTRE, TANG CHI NGONG EYE CLINIC AND PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITAL," HE SAID.

"IN ALL CASES, SURGERY IS ARRANGED ALMOST WITHOUT WAITING OR WITHIN DAYS OR WEEKS DEPENDING ON THE DEGREE OF URGENCY INVOLVED."

PATIENTS OF NON-URGENT CASES SUCH AS CATARACT ARE PLACED ON THE WAITING LIST.

THE WAITING TIME RANGES FROM BETWEEN FOUR AND SIX MONTHS AT THE SOUTH KWAI CHUNG CLINIC, EAST KOWLOON POLYCLINIC AND TUEN MUN HOSPITAL, TO BETWEEN 16 AND 18 MONTHS AT THE ARGYLE STREET OPHTHALMIC CENTRE, TANG CHI NGONG EYE CLINIC AND PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITAL.

DR LEE SAID PATIENTS WERE INFORMED OF THE WAITING TIME AND THEY MAY REQUEST FOR AN EARLY APPOINTMENT AT ANOTHER HOSPITAL OR CLINIC.

"REGULAR FOLLOW-UP CONSULTATIONS ARE PROVIDED TO THESE PATIENTS TO DETECT ANY DETERIORATION OF THEIR CONDITIONS AND TO PROVIDE PRIORITY ARRANGEMENTS WHERE APPROPRIATE," HE ADDED.

CRITERIA FOR EMPLOYING CONSULTANTS STRICTLY OBSERVED

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THE CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING WHETHER CONSULTANTS ARE TO BE EMPLOYED RECOGNISE THE NEED TO KEEP IN-HOUSE RESOURCES FULLY OCCUPIED AND TO MAINTAIN A REASONABLE LEVEL OF TECHNICAL EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE WITHIN GOVERNMENT.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON EMILY LAU IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BLAKE SAID THE CRITERIA WERE WHETHER THERE WERE QUALIFIED STAFF WITH THE REQUISITE SKILLS AVAILABLE TO UNDERTAKE THE WORK IN THE CIVIL SERVICE AND IF NOT, WHETHER THE LENGTH OF THE ASSIGNMENT JUSTIFIED THE RECRUITMENT OR TRAINING OF STAFF.

HE SAID OFFICERS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE APPROVAL OF EXPENDITURE AND APPOINTMENT OF CONSULTANTS WERE AWARE OF THE NEED TO STRICTLY OBSERVE THE CRITERIA.

THE SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF CONSULTANTS FOR INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS ARE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY WHO IS ADVISED BY THE CENTRAL CONSULTANTS SELECTION BOARD (CCSB) FOR GENERAL CONSULTANCY STUDIES.

APPROVAL WOULD ONLY BE GIVEN IF A DIRECTOR COULD DEMONSTRATE IN HIS WRITTEN SUBMISSION THAT THERE WAS A CLEAR NEED TO EMPLOY A CONSULTANT HAVING TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN-HOUSE RESOURCES AND THE NATURE OF THE TASK ITSELF, THE SECRETARY SAID.

ALSO, HE HAS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE PROPOSAL HAS THE SUPPORT OF THE RELEVANT POLICY BRANCH, AND NO OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT HAS THE RESOURCES TO UNDERTAKE THE WORK.

AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURAL CONSULTANTS HAS BEEN DELEGATED TO THE ENGINEERING AND ASSOCIATED CONSULTANTS SELECTION BOARD (EACSB) AND THE ARCHITECTURAL AND ASSOCIATED CONSULTANTS SELECTION BOARD (AACSB) RESPECTIVELY.

THE NUMBER OF CONSULTANCIES COMMISSIONED SINCE APRIL 1990 AND THEIR COSTS ARE:

	NO.	COST
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		HK\$ MILLION
GENERAL CONSULTANCIES (CCSB) :	43	269
ENGINEERING & ASSOCIATED CONSULTANCIES (EACSB) :	131	2,155
ARCHITECTURAL & ASSOCIATED CONSULTANCIES (AACSB) :	28	114
TOTAL :	202	2,538

TRAINING FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS ENCOURAGED

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THE GOVERNMENT IS TAKING A NUMBER OF MEASURES SPECIFICALLY AIMED AT ENCOURAGING HEADS OF KINDERGARTENS TO RELEASE THEIR TEACHERS FOR TRAINING, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, SAID.

THESE MEASURES INCLUDE OFFERING A VARIETY OF MODES OF ATTENDANCE AND TRAINING TIMES TO SUIT DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES, HE ADDED.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON STEPHEN NG MING-YUM IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MR CHAN SAID THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT PROVIDED INDIRECT ENCOURAGEMENT BY ALLOWING KINDERGARTEN OPERATORS TO INCREASE FEES TO COVER THE INCREASED STAFF COSTS.

"A NEW KINDERGARTEN FEE REMISSION SCHEME WAS INTRODUCED IN 1990-91 TO ASSIST NEEDY PARENTS SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE DETERRED BY THE INCREASED FEES FROM SENDING THEIR CHILDREN TO KINDERGARTENS.

"THE SCHEME WAS ENHANCED IN THE 1991-92 SCHOOL YEAR."

THE EDUCATION COMMISSION IS ALSO CONSIDERING FURTHER MEANS OF ENCOURAGING THE MOVE TOWARDS A BETTER QUALIFIED KINDERGARTEN TEACHING FORCE AND IS EXPECTED TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS IN ITS FIFTH REPORT TO BE RELEASED SHORTLY.

MR CHAN SAID THE NUMBER OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS EXPECTED TO RECEIVE TRAINING IN COURSES PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT IN EACH OF THE NEXT FIVE YEARS IS 960.

FURTHERMORE, THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC RUNS A CERTIFICATE COURSE IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION WHICH HAS AN ANNUAL INTAKE OF ABOUT 130.

STATISTICS SHOW THAT THE NUMBER OF QUALIFIED KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS TRAINED IN 1988-89, 1989-90 AND 1990-91 WERE 227, 224 AND 226 RESPECTIVELY, WHILE THE NUMBER OF QUALIFIED ASSISTANT KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS TRAINED IN THE SAME THREE-YEAR PERIOD WERE 484, 274 AND 358.

THE ACTUAL INTAKE AND CAPACITY OF THE TRAINING COURSES WERE 758 AND 960 IN 1988-89, 526 AND 960 IN 1989-90, AND 659 AND 1,020 IN 1990-91 RESPECTIVELY.

THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAS NOT RECEIVED ANY COMPLAINTS FROM TRAINED KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS CONCERNING DIFFICULTIES IN FINDING JOBS OR IN OBTAINING THE NORMATIVE SALARIES DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS, MR CHAN SAID.

WEST KOWLOON CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS WILL BE MONITORED

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A CONSULTANT WILL BE EMPLOYED BY SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR IN A NEW WEST KOWLOON ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT OFFICE TO MONITOR THE MEASURES TAKEN TO MINIMISE AIR, WATER AND NOISE POLLUTION FROM CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN WEST KOWLOON.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, IN A REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON FUNG KIN-KEE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE SAID THE CONSULTANT WOULD REPORT TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT AND WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR INVESTIGATING ANY POLLUTION PROBLEMS THAT ARISED.

THE CONSULTANT WILL ALSO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR RECOMMENDING REMEDIAL ACTION AND LIAISING WITH THE PROJECT ENGINEERS TO IMPLEMENT SUCH ACTION.

MR EASON SAID CONDITIONS WERE CONTAINED AND WOULD BE CONTAINED IN THE WEST KOWLOON RECLAMATION WORKS CONTRACTS REQUIRING THE SUPERVISING ENGINEER TO MINIMISE POLLUTION.

TO DO THIS, TRAINED STAFF USING EQUIPMENT AND METHODS AGREED WILL BE EMPLOYED BEFORE WORK COMMENCES.

"CONDITIONS WILL ALSO BE INCLUDED TO MINIMISE WATER AND NOISE POLLUTION, SUPPRESS DUST, AND ENSURE ENVIRONMENTALLY ACCEPTABLE METHODS ARE USED FOR DISPOSING OF WASTES.

"IF POLLUTION IS DETECTED, THE ENGINEER MAY BE REQUIRED TO STOP THE WORK UNTIL IT IS ABATED," MR EASON SAID.

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SQUATTER IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME EFFECTIVE TO AVERT ACCIDENTS

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AN IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME THAT PROVIDES BASIC SERVICES AND SAFETY FACILITIES IN SQUATTER AREAS HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE IN REDUCING FIRES, SERIOUS LANDSLIPS AND FLOODING.

THIS WAS STATED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON CONRAD LAM IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

INTRODUCED IN 1983, THE PROGRAMME COVERED 99 SQUATTER AREAS AT A TOTAL CAPITAL COST OF \$182 MILLION AND WAS COMPLETED IN 1990.

/THE PROGRAMME .....

THE PROGRAMME INCLUDED FIRE PREVENTION EDUCATION, THE PROVISION OF FIREBREAKS AND DRAINAGE FACILITIES, THE INSTALLATION OF FIRE MAINS AND HYDRANTS IN STRATEGIC LOCATIONS, AND THE CLEARANCE OF SQUATTER DWELLINGS MOST VULNERABLE TO LANDSLIPS.

MR EASON SAID A FOLLOW-UP PROGRAMME OF REGULAR INSPECTION, MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR HAD BEEN PUT IN PLACE BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO ENSURE THEIR CONTINUED EFFECTIVENESS UNTIL THE SQUATTER AREAS WERE CLEARED.

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URBAN SQUATTERS TO GO BY MID-90'S

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UNDER A FOUR-YEAR PROGRAMME FROM 1992/93 TO 1995/96 AN AVERAGE OF 14,500 URBAN SQUATTERS WILL BE CLEARED EACH YEAR, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON CONRAD LAM KUI-SHING, THE SECRETARY SAID THE CLEARANCE OF SQUATTER HUTS ON GOVERNMENT LAND IN THE URBAN AREA SINCE 1984 HAD REDUCED THE SQUATTER POPULATION FROM 183,000 TO 56,000.

HE SAID THE AIM WAS TO COMPLETE THE CLEARANCE OF ALL SQUATTER AREAS IN THE URBAN AREA BY THE MID-1990'S.

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GOVT WATCHFUL OVER SUBSTITUTE TO CFCS

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THE GOVERNMENT IS KEEPING CLOSE WATCH ON DEVELOPMENT OF A DIRECT SUBSTITUTE TO CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS (CFCS) AS REFRIGERANT IN EXISTING AIR-CONDITIONING AND REFRIGERATION PLANTS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON SAMUEL WONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BLAKE SAID RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THIS FIELD WAS BEING PURSUED BY SCIENTISTS WORLDWIDE AND IT WAS EXPECTED THAT THE OUTCOME WOULD BE AVAILABLE IN ABOUT A YEAR'S TIME.

"THE MOST ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE THE ADOPTION OF A DIRECT SUBSTITUTE TO THE REFRIGERANT IN THE EXISTING PLANT WITH ONLY LIMITED ALTERATION TO THE PLANT THEMSELVES," HE SAID.

CFCS COMMONLY USED AS REFRIGERANTS IN AIR-CONDITIONING PLANTS ARE REGARDED AS OZONE DEPLETING AS WELL AS CONTRIBUTING TO GLOBAL GREENHOUSE WARMING.

/SINCE THE .....

SINCE THE ENACTMENT OF THE OZONE LAYER PROTECTION ORDINANCE IN 1989, MEASURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF CFC ESCAPING TO THE ATMOSPHERE INCLUDING THE USE OF RECYCLING ANCILLARY EQUIPMENT.

PLANTS OPERATING WITH REFRIGERANTS OTHER THAN CFC HAVE BEEN INSTALLED.

THE SECRETARY SAID THESE INCLUDED THE HCFC CENTRIFUGAL CHILLERS AT THE KAI TAK AIRPORT AND THE WANCHAI TOWER 3, AND THE LITHIUM BROMIDE ABSORPTION CHILLER AT QUEEN MARY HOSPITAL.

THE HCFCs HAVE A SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER OZONE DEPLETION AND GLOBAL WARMING POTENTIAL.

IN THE ABSORPTION SYSTEM, WATER IS USED AS A REFRIGERANT WHICH IS CFC-FREE.

IN THE LONGER TERM, MR BLAKE SAID CONSIDERATION HAD BEEN GIVEN TO REPLACING ALL EXISTING INSTALLATIONS BY HCFC-22 AND ABSORPTION CHILLERS.

HE SAID A CAPITAL EXPENDITURE OF ABOUT \$500 MILLION AND AN ADDITIONAL ENERGY COST OF \$30 MILLION A YEAR WERE REQUIRED IF HCFC-22 WAS TO BE PURSUED.

THE CORRESPONDING CAPITAL COST AND ADDITIONAL ENERGY COST PER YEAR WERE \$920 MILLION AND \$490 MILLION FOR ABSORPTION CHILLERS.

THE SECRETARY SAID A TWO-YEAR RE-FITTING PROGRAMME WAS EXPECTED FOR EITHER OPTION.

ADDITIONAL PLANT ROOM SPACE WOULD INVARIABLY BE REQUIRED, WHICH MIGHT NOT PERMIT THE REPLACEMENT OR MODIFICATION OF THE PLANTS IN ALL CASES.

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#### USE OF GIC SITES WILL BE OPTIMISED

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THE USE OF GOVERNMENT/INSTITUTION/COMMUNITY (GIC) SITES IS KEPT UNDER REVIEW TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF END-USERS.

WHERE SITES ARE FOUND TO BE UNDER-UTILISED, STEPS WILL BE TAKEN TO OPTIMISE THEIR USE, IF NECESSARY, BY REDEVELOPMENT.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ERIC LI IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

NOTING THAT THE ADMINISTRATION RECOGNISED THE NEED TO OPTIMISE LAND USE, MR EASON SAID LAND USE OPTIMISATION WAS ALSO ASSISTED BY INCLUDING GIC USES WITHIN COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES OR REVISED USE PROJECTS ON GIC SITES WHERE IT WAS ACCEPTABLE BOTH TO THE USERS AND THE TOWN PLANNING BOARD.

GIC FACILITIES ARE NORMALLY DESIGNED TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE END-USER.

HE SAID THE INTENSITY TO WHICH GIC SITES WERE DEVELOPED WAS GENERALLY DETERMINED IN ACCORDANCE WITH A SCHEDULE OF ACCOMMODATION RELATED TO THEIR USE AND PLANNING STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES.

"FOR EXAMPLE, THE SITE REQUIREMENTS OF A SCHOOL ARE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OF A GOVERNMENT OFFICE BUILDING, OR A POLYCLINIC, OR A DIVISIONAL POLICE STATION, ETC.

"PLOT RATIO IS THUS NOT A DETERMINING FACTOR IN DECIDING HOW AND TO WHAT INTENSITY GIC SITES SHOULD BE DEVELOPED," MR EASON SAID.

NOR WAS IT APPROPRIATE TO COMPARE THE DEVELOPMENT INTENSITY OF GIC SITES WITH THAT OF INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL OR RESIDENTIAL SITES BY REFERENCE TO PLOT RATIOS, THE SECRETARY ADDED.

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FOREIGN DOMESTIC HELPERS MAY APPLY FOR STAY EXTENSION TO SEEK REDRESS

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FOREIGN DOMESTIC HELPERS WHOSE CONTRACTS HAVE BEEN TERMINATED PREMATURELY ARE NORMALLY PERMITTED TO REMAIN IN HONG KONG FOR TWO WEEKS SO AS TO SETTLE THEIR AFFAIRS AND MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO LEAVE HONG KONG.

BUT IF THEY HAVE A GENUINE REASON TO STAY BEYOND THE TWO WEEKS PERMITTED, SUCH AS THEY HAVE BEEN UNFAIRLY TREATED AND ARE SEEKING REDRESS, THEY MAY APPLY FOR AN EXTENSION OF STAY IN ORDER TO PURSUE A CLAIM AGAINST THEIR FORMER EMPLOYERS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ELSIE TU IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR CHAN SAID THE CURRENT PERIOD OF EXTENSION RANGED FROM FIVE TO 17 WEEKS DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF INDIVIDUAL CASES AND A STANDARD FEE OF \$115 WAS CHARGED FOR EACH EXTENSION.

UPON RECEIPT OF A REQUEST FROM A FOREIGN DOMESTIC HELPER, THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT WILL NORMALLY ARRANGE CONCILIATION MEETINGS WITHIN FOUR WEEKS.

LAST YEAR, IT DEALT WITH 908 SUCH CASES, OF WHICH TWO-THIRDS WERE SETTLED AFTER CONCILIATION.

BUT IF THE DISPUTE IS SUBSEQUENTLY BROUGHT TO THE LABOUR TRIBUNAL, THE WAITING TIME FOR THE HEARING COULD BE UP TO FOUR MONTHS.

IN ANY CASE, MR CHAN SAID, FOREIGN DOMESTIC HELPERS ARE NOT NORMALLY ALLOWED TO WORK FOR NEW EMPLOYERS DURING THIS WAITING PERIOD.

FOREIGN DOMESTIC HELPERS ARE ALLOWED TO CHANGE EMPLOYMENT ONLY IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES SUCH AS WHEN THEY HAVE BEEN UNFAIRLY TREATED OR WHEN AN EMPLOYER IS UNABLE TO CONTINUE WITH THE CONTRACT BECAUSE OF FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES, EMIGRATION, TRANSFER ABROAD OR DEATH.

"THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT CONSIDERS THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF EACH CASE TO SEE WHETHER THERE ARE STRONG HUMANITARIAN OR COMPASSIONATE GROUNDS TO JUSTIFY EXCEPTIONAL TREATMENT," HE SAID.

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DEMAND FOR AIRPORT BUS SERVICE UNDER REVIEW

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL KEEP THE DEMAND FOR AN AIRPORT BUS SERVICE UNDER REVIEW, TAKING FULL ACCOUNT OF GROWING HOTEL ACCOMMODATION IN MONG KOK AND YAU MA TEI.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HOWARD YOUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR LEUNG SAID AN AIRPORT BUS SERVICE (AIRBUS ROUTE A4) FOR MONG KOK WAS INTRODUCED BY KMB IN JANUARY 1990. THE SERVICE WAS LATER EXTENDED TO THE CHINA FERRY TERMINAL.

HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF THE LOW UTILISATION AND SUSTAINED FINANCIAL LOSS, THE SERVICE WAS CANCELLED IN MAY LAST YEAR FOLLOWING CONSULTATIONS WITH THE YAU-TSIM DISTRICT BOARD.

DURING THE LUNAR NEW YEAR HOLIDAYS THIS YEAR, KMB TESTED A NEW SERVICE (AIRBUS ROUTE A8) FROM KAI TAK TO THE MTR PRINCE EDWARD STATION. ONLY 15% OF THE AVAILABLE CAPACITY WAS TAKEN UP.

AS 10 OF THE 11 HOTELS IN MONG KOK AND YAU MA TEI HAD THEIR OWN TRANSPORT SERVICES TO KAI TAK, MR LEUNG SAID THERE WAS THEREFORE NO PLANS AT THIS STAGE TO INVITE INTERESTED PARTIES TO OPERATE AN AIRPORT BUS SERVICE FOR WEST KOWLOON.

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 1992

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HOUSING SOCIETY DOES NOT APPLY FOR FUNDS IN 1992/93

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THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE HOUSING SOCIETY HAD NO PLANS TO APPLY FOR FUNDS FROM THE GOVERNMENT DURING 1992-93.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK, MR EASON SAID THE HOUSING SOCIETY'S RENTAL AND FLATS-FOR-SALE PROJECTS WERE FUNDED FROM ITS OWN RESOURCES.

IT IS OPEN TO THE SOCIETY TO APPLY TO THE GOVERNMENT FOR LOW-INTEREST LOANS FROM THE DEVELOPMENT LOAN FUND FOR ITS RURAL PUBLIC HOUSING AND URBAN IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS, HE SAID.

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COMMITTEES AIMED TO GIVE BEST ADVICE

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THE GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL AIMS TO ENSURE THAT THE COMPOSITION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND THEIR MEMBERSHIP ARE SUCH AS TO PROVIDE, IN EACH CASE, THE BEST AND MOST COMPREHENSIVE ADVICE TO IT IN THEIR AREAS OF CONCERN.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SZE, IN A REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TIK CHI-YUEN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"THIS MAY MEAN, IN SOME CASES, THAT MEMBERSHIP ARE DRAWN FROM A BROAD SPECTRUM OF THE COMMUNITY, WHILE IN OTHERS MEMBERSHIP ARE DRAWN FROM PARTICULAR SECTORS WITH THE RELEVANT EXPERTISE," HE SAID.

WHILE THERE IS NO UNIVERSALLY APPLICABLE POLICY OF APPOINTING LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS TO ADVISORY COMMITTEES, MR SZE STRESSED THAT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL WAS NOT A BAR TO APPOINTMENT TO ADVISORY COMMITTEES.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVED IN THE BEST MAN AND WOMAN FOR THE JOB.

AT PRESENT, OVER 400 ADVISORY COMMITTEES GIVE ADVICE TO THE GOVERNMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR TERMS OF REFERENCE.

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OVERTIME CONCEPT DIFFICULT TO APPLY ON MEDICAL INTERNS

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IT IS DIFFICULT TO APPLY THE CONCEPT OF OVERTIME ON HOSPITAL INTERNS GIVEN THE NEED TO PROVIDE THEM WITH GOOD EXPOSURE AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, DR S.H. LEE, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ANDREW WONG, DR LEE SAID THE WORK SCHEDULE OF INTERNS WAS DRAWN UP BY THEIR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND TRAINING NEEDS.

"APART FROM SCHEDULED DUTIES WITHIN OFFICE HOURS SUCH AS OUTPATIENT CLINICS AND WARD ROUNDS, THEY ARE ALSO REQUIRED TO BE ON CALL IN THE HOSPITAL TO CATER FOR THE NEEDS OF PATIENTS," HE SAID.

"ACCOMMODATION IS PROVIDED TO THEM FOR THIS PURPOSE BUT THE FREQUENCY OF SUCH ON-CALL DUTIES WILL VARY BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL HOSPITALS AND DIFFERENT SPECIALTIES WITHIN EACH HOSPITAL ACCORDING TO THEIR ACTIVITY LEVEL AND CASE MIX."

IN DISCHARGING THEIR DUTIES, DR LEE SAID INTERNS WERE SUPERVISED BY THE DUTY MEDICAL OFFICER, SENIOR MEDICAL OFFICER OR CONSULTANT IN-CHARGE TO ENSURE THAT THE STANDARD OF SERVICE PROVIDED TO PATIENTS WAS MAINTAINED AT ALL TIMES.

THE 12-MONTH INTERNSHIP PERIOD IS NECESSARY TO PROVIDE PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR THESE MEDICAL GRADUATES BEFORE THEY BECOME ELIGIBLE FOR FULL REGISTRATION UNDER THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION ORDINANCE.

SUCH TRAINING IS ALSO REGARDED AS A CONTINUATION OF EDUCATION FOR INTERNS WHO ARE SUPERVISED BY THE MEDICAL SCHOOLS OF THE TWO UNIVERSITIES DURING THIS PERIOD.

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GOVT MAINTAINS RESTRICTIONS ON WATER CATCHMENT AREAS

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO INTENTION TO LIFT RESTRICTIONS ON EXISTING WATER CATCHMENT AREAS IN HONG KONG IN ORDER TO PRESERVE VALUABLE SOURCES OF WATER, THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HOWARD YOUNG, MR BLAKE ASSURED THAT THE RESTRICTIONS WERE IMPOSED IN A MANNER THAT NEVERTHELESS DID RESULT IN FAIR AND REASONABLE DIVISION BETWEEN WATER CATCHMENT AND OTHER USES.

HE SAID IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT POLICY TO MAINTAIN THE EXISTING WATER CATCHMENT AREAS FOR THE TERRITORY AS THEY PROVIDED THE GATHERING GROUNDS FOR AN IMPORTANT AND VALUABLE SOURCE OF WATER SUPPLY.

/HE SAID .....

HE SAID ONE-THIRD OF THE WATER SUPPLY CAME FROM THE NATURAL YIELD FROM THESE AREAS.

"IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO RELY SOLELY ON THE SUPPLY FROM CHINA, WHICH IS EXTRACTED FROM A SINGLE RIVER SOURCE AND IS PROVIDED THROUGH A DELIVERY SYSTEM OVER A LONG DISTANCE.

FURTHERMORE, HE SAID ANY LOSS OF WATER FROM THE GATHERING GROUNDS IN HONG KONG WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE GOOD BY BUYING MORE WATER FROM CHINA.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT WHILE RESTRICTIONS ON CATCHMENT AREAS MUST BE IMPOSED TO ENSURE A HIGH QUALITY OF WATER FROM THE CATCHMENT AREAS, A FLEXIBLE APPROACH WAS ADOPTED TO MAXIMISE THE UTILISATION OF LAND TERRITORY-WIDE.

"SUCH CONTROLS WILL OF COURSE VARY DEPENDING ON CIRCUMSTANCES," THE SECRETARY SAID.

GENERALLY, ANY EXISTING USE OF CATCHMENT AREAS WAS LARGELY MAINTAINED AND THE RESTRICTION WAS MORE STRICT ON CROWN LAND THAN ON LEASED LAND.

"MORE STRINGENT CONTROL IS IMPOSED IF A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IS NEARER TO THE POINT OF WATER COLLECTION OR A RESERVOIR. LESSER RESTRICTIONS APPLY TO COMMUNITY-WIDE DEVELOPMENT, SUCH AS RECREATIONAL FACILITIES."

WHERE DEVELOPMENT WAS PERMITTED, MR BLAKE SAID VERY STRINGENT CRITERIA WERE IMPOSED TO ENSURE NO POLLUTION OF THE WATER RUN-OFF WITHIN THE CATCHMENT AREA.

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#### DEPOSIT PROTECTION SCHEME MOTION PASSED

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A MOTION ON THE DEPOSIT PROTECTION SCHEME WAS PASSED BY LEGISLATORS AFTER A TWO-HOUR DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

TWENTY-ONE LEGISLATORS SPOKE ON THE MOTION MOVED BY PROFESSOR THE HON EDWARD CHEN. THE SECRETARY FOR MONETARY AFFAIRS, MR DAVID NENDICK, SPOKE ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT.

ANOTHER MOTION MOVED BY DR THE HON CONRAD LAM ON INDUSTRIAL SAFETY WAS ALSO PASSED.

FOURTEEN MEMBERS DEBATED THE MOTION AND THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, AND THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, REPLIED FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

/IN ADDITION .....

IN ADDITION, SEVEN MEMBERS SPOKE IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE ACCOUNTABILITY AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS OF ADVISORY BOARDS AND STATUTORY BODIES.

THE DEBATE WAS RAISED BY DR THE HON HUANG CHEN-YA. THE SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SZE, REPLIED FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

THREE BILLS WERE PASSED IN THE LEGCO. THEY WERE FIRE SERVICES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, BUILDINGS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 AND AERIAL ROPEWAYS (SAFETY) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992.

THREE BILLS WERE INTRODUCED FOR FIRST AND SECOND READINGS. DEBATES ON THEM WERE ADJOURNED.

THEY WERE EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 1992 AND SOCIETIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992.

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 1992

- 33 -

GOVERNOR VISITS ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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THE GOVERNOR, LORD WILSON, WAS BRIEFED THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON ON HOW GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WERE CHARGED BY THE ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT (EMSD) UNDER A NEW COMMERCIALISATION SCHEME TO PROMOTE GREATER EFFICIENCY FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THEIR VEHICLES.

LORD WILSON, ACCOMPANIED BY THE DIRECTOR OF ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL SERVICES, MR MIAO CHI, VISITED THE DEPARTMENT'S VEHICLE WORKSHOPS IN HAPPY VALLEY.

HE WAS BRIEFED ON THE "OPERATING SERVICES ACCOUNT" INTRODUCED BY THE DEPARTMENT AT ITS VEHICLE WORKSHOPS LAST MONTH.

PREVIOUSLY, THE DEPARTMENT HAD THE RESPONSIBILITY, AND PROVIDED THE NECESSARY FUNDS, FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF ALL GOVERNMENT VEHICLES.

UNDER THE NEW SCHEME, DEPARTMENTS HAVE TO PAY EMSD COMMERCIAL RATES FOR VEHICLE REPAIRS FROM THEIR OWN BUDGETS.

"THE IDEA IS TO MAKE EMSD MORE EFFICIENT BY PLACING ITS OPERATION ON A COMMERCIAL BASIS. DEPARTMENTS WILL BENEFIT FROM THE IMPROVED SERVICE," LORD WILSON SAID.

THE DEPARTMENT PLANS TO EXTEND THE OPERATING SERVICES ACCOUNT TO ITS OTHER SECTIONS SUCH AS ITS AIR-CONDITIONING AND ELECTRICAL WORKSHOPS NEXT YEAR.

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1991/92 PAY TREND SURVEY

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THE PAY TREND SURVEY COMMITTEE MET TODAY (WEDNESDAY) TO CONSIDER THE FINDINGS OF THE 1991/92 PAY TREND SURVEY.

THE MEETING WAS CHAIRED BY MR ANDREW K.W. SO, A MEMBER OF THE STANDING COMMISSION ON CIVIL SERVICE SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE.

THE SURVEY, WHICH WAS CONDUCTED BY THE PAY SURVEY AND RESEARCH UNIT, MEASURED PAY TRENDS IN A SELECTED GROUP OF 65 COMPANIES DURING THE PERIOD APRIL 2, 1991 TO APRIL 1, 1992.

IT TOOK INTO ACCOUNT INCREASES RELATING TO COST OF LIVING, GENERAL CHANGES IN MARKET RATES, COMPANY PERFORMANCE, MERIT AND INSCALE INCREMENT.

THE COMMITTEE ACCEPTED THE FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY WHICH INDICATED THAT THE FOLLOWING AVERAGE PAY INCREASES WERE AWARDED BY THE SURVEYED COMPANIES :

/11.81% FOR .....

11.81% FOR EMPLOYEES EARNING LESS THAN \$8,340 PER MONTH;

12.06% FOR EMPLOYEES EARNING BETWEEN \$8,340 AND \$25,565 PER MONTH;

12.50% FOR EMPLOYEES EARNING BETWEEN \$25,566 AND \$51,700 PER MONTH.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE COMMITTEE HAS EMPHASISED THAT THESE FIGURES WERE THE RESULTS OF A SURVEY OF PAY TRENDS IN THE PRIVATE COMPANIES.

PAY ADJUSTMENT IN THE CIVIL SERVICE IS A SEPARATE MATTER AND THE LEVEL OF THE ADJUSTMENT IS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNMENT IN CONSULTATION WITH THE STAFF CONSULTATIVE COUNCILS.

THE PAY TREND SURVEY COMMITTEE CONSISTS OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STANDING COMMISSION ON CIVIL SERVICE SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE, THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON DISCIPLINED SERVICES SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE, THE ADMINISTRATION, AND THE STAFF SIDES OF THE SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE COUNCIL, THE MODEL SCALE 1 STAFF CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL, THE POLICE FORCE COUNCIL AND THE DISCIPLINED SERVICES CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL.

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BLOCK 26 OF BAGUIO VILLA READY FOR REOCCUPATION TOMORROW

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ALL RESIDENTIAL UNITS OF BLOCK 26, BAGUIO VILLA IN POKFULAM CAN BE REOCCUPIED TOMORROW (THURSDAY), A SPOKESMAN FOR THE BUILDING AUTHORITY SAID TODAY.

A NOTICE OF EXPIRY OF THE CLOSURE ORDER SHALL BE POSTED ON THE BUILDING AT 6 AM TOMORROW AND OCCUPANTS CAN REOCCUPY THEIR FLATS AFTER THEN, THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

HOWEVER, EXCEPT FOR THE LIFT LOBBY AND EXIT PASSAGES, ALL NON-RESIDENTIAL AREAS ON THE PODIUM LEVEL AND BELOW, INCLUDING ALL CAR PARKING AREAS, SHALL REMAIN CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE, HE SAID.

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## PUBLIC TRANSPORT - CUSTOMER MUST COME FIRST

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THE GOVERNMENT LOOKS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS TO PUT THE CUSTOMER FIRST AND TO RESPOND TO DEMANDS FOR IMPROVED SERVICES BY UPGRADING QUALITY AND KEEPING THEIR SERVICES WITH RISING COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE GOVERNMENT MUST AND DOES MAINTAIN A REGULATORY ROLE TO ENSURE THAT THE SERVICES PROVIDED ARE SAFE, EFFICIENT, COST-EFFECTIVE AND IN COMPLIANCE WITH TRANSPORT POLICY.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR JOHN TELFORD, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON "TRANSPORT - PUTTING THE CUSTOMER FIRST" HOSTED BY THE CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORT IN HONG KONG.

"THE GOVERNMENT SEEKS TO STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN ENCOURAGING INITIATIVE AND SELF-DISCIPLINE ON THE PART OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME MAINTAINING ADEQUATE CONTROLS IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST," HE SAID.

EXPLAINING THE GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT, MR TELFORD SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD ADOPTED A POLICY OF INTER-MODAL CO-ORDINATION, GIVING PRIORITY TO THE MASS CARRIERS AND YET MINIMISING WASTEFUL COMPETITION.

"BUT OUR APPROACH DOES ALLOW FOR HEALTHY COMPETITION TO STIMULATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS TO REVIEW AND IMPROVE THEIR SERVICES CONSTANTLY, AND TO IDENTIFY AND MEET CHANGING MARKET DEMANDS," HE SAID.

MR TELFORD SAID ALL MAJOR TRANSPORT COMPANIES HAD NOW INTRODUCED BETTER CUSTOMER RELATION ARRANGEMENTS WHICH VARIED FROM ATTENDANCE AT DISTRICT BOARD MEETINGS AND CONDUCTING OPINION SURVEYS TO ESTABLISHING CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRES AND PASSENGER LIAISON GROUP.

"MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE, BUT A PROMISING START HAS BEEN MADE IN PUTTING THE CUSTOMER FIRST," HE SAID.

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## TOLO EXPORT SCHEME TO BENEFIT ENVIRONMENT

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THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT TODAY (WEDNESDAY) RELEASED DETAILS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF A SCHEME TO TAKE EFFLUENT FROM SHA TIN TREATMENT WORKS TO THE KAI TAK NULLAH.

THE TREATMENT WORKS PURIFIES THE SEWAGE BY FULL BIOLOGICAL TREATMENT WITH 90% NITROGEN REMOVAL SO THAT IT MEETS THE SAME STANDARDS AS ARE USED IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA.

DETAILED INVESTIGATIONS BY THE DEPARTMENT HAVE SHOWN THAT THE SCHEME IS THE MOST RELIABLE WAY TO REDUCE THE POLLUTION OF TOLO HARBOUR, BUT IT WILL NOT HARM ANY PART OF VICTORIA HARBOUR.

"WE DON'T NEED DRINKABLE WATER TO IMPROVE VICTORIA HARBOUR," SAID PRINCIPAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OFFICER, MR PAUL HOLMES.

HE SAID THE SCHEME WOULD TAKE OVER ONE TONNE OF NITROGEN POLLUTANT AWAY FROM THE SENSITIVE WATERS OF TOLO HARBOUR EVERYDAY.

"TOGETHER WITH IMPROVEMENTS IN THE SEWAGE TREATMENT PROCESSES THAT HAVE ALREADY BEEN COMPLETED, THIS WILL CUT THE POLLUTION LOAD ON TOLO HARBOUR BY HALF. THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGY THAT COULD ACHIEVE THIS RESULT SO EFFICIENTLY.

"THE RESULT OF TOLO HARBOUR WILL BE BETTER WATER QUALITY, LESS RED TIDES, AND AN ENVIRONMENT THAT WILL ENCOURAGE THE RETURN OF NATURAL MARINE LIFE.

"THE FISHING INDUSTRY WILL BENEFIT, AND SO WILL THE THOUSANDS OF REGULAR VISITORS WHO WISH TO ENJOY PLEASANT COUNTRYSIDE FREE FROM THE INTRUSION OF URBAN POLLUTION.

"THE PURIFIED EFFLUENT WILL BE PUMPED INTO THE KAI TAK NULLAH. THIS NULLAH IS VERY HEAVILY POLLUTED AT PRESENT, AND ANOTHER PROJECT UNDER THE SEWERAGE MASTER PLAN FOR EAST KOWLOON WILL STOP MUCH OF THIS POLLUTION.

STAGE I OF THIS PROJECT WILL BE COMPLETED IN MID-1994 AT THE COST OF \$484 MILLION.

MR HOLMES POINTED OUT THAT THE EXPORT SCHEME WOULD IMPROVE WATER QUALITY IN THE NULLAH.

"THE SEWAGE EFFLUENT IS SO THOROUGHLY TREATED BEFORE IT LEAVES SHA TIN THAT IT WILL BE MUCH BETTER THAN THE WATER IN THE NULLAH. IT WILL INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF DISSOLVED OXYGEN IN THE NULLAH BY ABOUT HALF : THIS IS ONE OF THE KEY INDICATORS OF THE HEALTH OF A BODY OF WATER.

"EVENTUALLY, THE PURIFIED EFFLUENT FROM SHA TIN WILL FLOW OUT INTO VICTORIA HARBOUR. BECAUSE THE WATER IS DISPERSED RAPIDLY BY TIDES AND CURRENTS, THERE WILL BE NO TIME FOR HARMFUL RED TIDES TO GROW.

"THIS IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM TOLO HARBOUR, WHERE THE SHAPE OF THE INLET CAUSES POLLUTANTS TO ACCUMULATE AND ENCOURAGES RED TIDES TO GROW.

"WHILE CARRYING OUT THIS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT, THE GOVERNMENT IS ALSO WORKING ON ITS STRATEGIC SEWAGE DISPOSAL SCHEME.

"THE FIRST PHASE OF THIS SCHEME, WHICH WILL COLLECT AND TREAT 80% OF THE SEWAGE LOAD THAT NOW GOES INTO VICTORIA HARBOUR, WILL COMPLETE IN 1997 AT A COST OF ABOUT \$3.1 BILLION," HE SAID.

LEGAL DEPARTMENT REVIEWING AGREEMENTS OF OVERSEAS OFFICERS

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THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT IS AT PRESENT CARRYING OUT ITS ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE AGREEMENTS OF OVERSEAS OFFICERS WHOSE AGREEMENTS HAVE AT LEAST ONE YEAR TO RUN BEFORE EXPIRY.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE DEPARTMENT SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IT WAS THE INTENTION OF THE DEPARTMENT TO ENSURE THAT IF IT WAS DECIDED THAT THE AGREEMENT OF AN OFFICER WAS NOT TO BE RENEWED, THAT OFFICER WOULD BE GIVEN AMPLE NOTIFICATION TO PLAN HIS OR HER CAREER.

THE CURRENT REVIEW IS STILL IN PROGRESS AND THE DEPARTMENT IS EXPECTED TO FORWARD ITS RECOMMENDATION TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION AND THE CIVIL SERVICE BRANCH IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

IT IS ENVISAGED THAT THE AGREEMENTS OF ABOUT 20 OFFICERS AT VARIOUS RANKS WILL EITHER NOT BE RENEWED ON EXPIRY BETWEEN OCTOBER 1993 AND SEPTEMBER 1994, OR IN CERTAIN CASES BE EXTENDED FOR ONE YEAR.

"THIS WILL GIVE THE OFFICERS AT LEAST MORE THAN A YEAR OR IN SOME CASES MORE THAN TWO YEARS TO PLAN THEIR CAREER," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S LOCALISATION POLICY, PREFERENCE IS GIVEN TO LOCAL CANDIDATES AT THE RECRUITMENT LEVEL, AND IN CONSIDERING WHETHER TO RENEW THE CONTRACT OF AN OVERSEAS OFFICER.

MORE LOCAL OFFICERS IN THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT ARE EXPECTED TO BECOME SUITABLE TO FILL POSTS AT SENIOR CROWN COUNSEL AND DIRECTORATE LEVELS AS A RESULT OF TWO SCHEMES INTRODUCED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO SPEED UP THE PACE OF LOCALISATION.

THE DOUBLE LADDER SCHEME, AIMED AT PROMOTING LOCAL CROWN COUNSEL WITH POTENTIAL TO SENIOR CROWN COUNSEL, WAS IMPLEMENTED AT THE END OF 1988.

AS A RESULT, THE NUMBER OF LOCAL SENIOR CROWN COUNSEL HAS GONE UP TO THE PRESENT 65 (46.8%) OUT OF A TOTAL OF 139, COMPARED WITH THE FIGURE OF 23 (23%) OUT OF A TOTAL OF 99 AS AT THE END OF 1988.

THE DEVELOPMENT POSTS SCHEME WAS INTRODUCED IN THE MIDDLE OF 1991, WITH THE AIM OF ENHANCING THE PROMOTION POTENTIAL OF LOCAL OFFICERS TO FILL DIRECTORATE POSTS.

THE GROOMING PERIOD IS FOR ABOUT 18 MONTHS CONSISTING OF TWO ELEMENTS, ABOUT SIX MONTHS TRAINING OR ATTACHMENT TO A GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT BRANCH, FOLLOWED BY ABOUT 12 MONTHS ACTING APPOINTMENT IN A DIRECTORATE POST.

UNDER THE DEVELOPMENT POSTS SCHEME, SEVEN LOCAL SENIOR CROWN COUNSEL ARE ACTING IN DIRECTORATE POSTS WHILE FOUR OTHERS HAVE BEEN ATTACHED TO THE GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT.

ANOTHER LOCAL SENIOR CROWN COUNSEL IS ATTACHED TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN GENEVA.

AT PRESENT SEVEN OUT OF A TOTAL STRENGTH OF 50 DIRECTORATE COUNSEL ARE LOCAL.

MEANWHILE, THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT HAS RECRUITED SOME OVERSEAS OFFICERS ALONG WITH SIX LOCAL OFFICERS AT THE CROWN COUNSEL LEVEL TO FILL VACANCIES.

WHILE PRIORITY IS GIVEN TO LOCAL CANDIDATES AT RECRUITMENT, OVERSEAS CANDIDATES WILL BE APPOINTED ONLY WHEN THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH SUITABLE LOCAL CANDIDATES TO MEET OPERATIONAL NEEDS.

THE SPOKESMAN POINTED OUT THAT WITHOUT FILLING THE VACANT POSTS, THE DEPARTMENT WILL BE UNABLE TO PROVIDE THE REQUIRED LEVEL OF SERVICE.

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FINANCE COMMITTEE TO MEET ON FRIDAY

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THE FINANCE COMMITTEE WILL HOLD A MEETING AT 2.30 PM ON FRIDAY (MAY 22) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO OBSERVE THE COMMITTEE'S PROCEEDINGS FROM THE CHAMBER'S PUBLIC GALLERIES. THEY MAY MAKE RESERVATIONS BY CALLING 869 9492.

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ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS:

THE COMMITTEE'S PAPERS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR ADVANCE READING FROM 2.30 PM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AT THE OMELCO PRESS OFFICE. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CONTENT OF THE PAPERS WILL BE EMBARGOED FOR USE UNTIL THE MEETING ENDS.

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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND  
MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS  
\* \* \* \* \*

	DATE	\$ MILLION
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CLOSING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT ON	19.5.92	988
EFFECT OF FORWARDS TO BE SETTLED ON	20.5.92	+207
EFFECT OF OPERATIONS THIS MORNING		-207
EFFECT OF OPERATIONS THIS AFTERNOON		+300 *

\* O/N ASSISTANCE TO BE REVERSED ON 21.5.92

TRADE WEIGHTED INDEX 111.5\*+0.0\* 20.5.92

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND

EF BILLS		HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BONDS				
TERMS	YIELD	TERM	ISSUE	COUPON	PRICE	YIELD
1W	2.54 PCT	18M	2311	6.25	102.48	4.57
1M	2.82 PCT	21M	2402	5.50	101.03	4.93
3M	3.11 PCT	24M	2405	5.50	100.84	5.12
6M	3.41 PCT					
12M	4.00 PCT					

TOTAL TURNOVER OF BILLS AND BONDS - 12,929MN

CLOSED 20 MAY 1992